

THE TWO MIDSHIPMEN

BY
CAPT. ARMSTRONG.



THE
TWO MIDSHIPMEN.

A Tale of the Sea.

BY
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"THE WAR-HAWK," ETC. ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

"Now then, Sidney, tell me, why you, who seem born to shine in any profession, selected the Navy. It is strange that you should dislike a service in which, in so short a time, you have signalized yourself."

"Nay, Harry, you mistake me—I do not dislike the service—I merely observed, the other day, to Captain Arlington, that if the choice of a profession had been allowed me, I should undoubtedly have preferred the Army."

"Well," interrupted Henry, "we are now rapidly approaching dear old England; you promised to tell me what led to your being placed a blessed middy aboard his Majesty's ship 'Reindeer,' instead of flourishing in the showy uniform of a crack regiment?"

"My story is soon told—the events of my brief career are few—what's to come—"

"Faith, I'll tell you what's to come, Sidney, my boy," interrupted Henry Tressidder, a fair, flaxen-headed youth of sixteen. "What's to come—the dog's watch, and a mast heading, if that brute Elliot can catch us napping."

"Ah," returned Sidney Vernon, "I'll pay him off some of these days, depend on it. It is this very Elliot that has made me dislike instead of love a most noble profession. However, not to lose time—for, as you say, the dog's watch is sure to come—I will give you a very brief sketch of my early experience.

"Like all younger sons of our family, through several generations, I was christened Sidney. My father was the second son of Sir Montague Vernon, a baronet of very ancient descent, and very considerable property. His parents wished him to embrace some profession, and very fairly gave him the choice of the law, the navy, army, or the church. Now, it unfortunately happened—I say unfortunately because it turned out so—that my sire evinced a decided dislike to becoming either a lawyer, sailor, soldier, or parson—but to the infinite disgust and anger of his father embraced a mercantile career.

"Now it must be confessed that there was a secret prompting in his heart towards becoming a merchant—besides, his dislike to the other professions offered him—and the truth must be told—love, as usual, had his share in the determination.

"At the University of Cambridge he had formed a close friendship with the son of an opulent merchant, followed up by a much more tender attachment to his friend's beautiful and accomplished sister.

"Notwithstanding my grandfather's violent opposition to his wishes, my father ultimately married the merchant's daughter, Miss Polworth, and in time became a partner in the highly respectable and wealthy firm of Henderson, Polworth, Drake, and Co.

"From the day of my father's marriage, all intercourse with his own family ceased. About this period, his younger brother died; and scarcely a year after, the baronet himself departed this life, and was succeeded in his title and estates by his eldest son.

"Five years after, my uncle married a lady of birth and high connections, but without fortune. High station and connection was however all my uncle cared for.

"Sir Christopher Vernon is, by all accounts, of a very stern, haughty, and unforgiving nature. A reconciliation with my father he declared to be impossible, after the disgrace he had brought upon his family by his marriage and choice of a profession.

"In the mean time, the firm of Henderson, Polworth, Drake, and Co., prospered exceedingly. My father became very wealthy, and purchased a fine property in Hampshire. As kind and affectionate a man as ever lived, he made many overtures for a reconciliation with his haughty brother, but in vain. Deeply hurt at this conduct, he turned to his own happy fireside, surrounded by smiling, cheerful faces, and soon forgot the narrow policy and want of common affection in his cold-hearted relatives.

"Years rolled on—my father still engaged heart and soul in mercantile pursuits, contrary to the wishes of his beloved wife, who was wise enough to see, that, with a splendid fortune, it was ill-judged to continue speculation to increase wealth already more than sufficient, when some unforeseen blow might deprive him of that which he already possessed. But my poor father had never known a reverse, and he laughed good-humouredly at my mother's apprehensions.

"But, alas! the blow did come; but not in the way his gentle partner hinted at. Typhus fever, in one week, carried off my mother, my elder brother, and my only sister. This fearful and unexpected calamity nearly deprived my father of reason—he never recovered the blow; his mind was so terribly shaken, that to drive away thought, perhaps, he, for the first time, plunged into doubtful speculations. I speak, my dear Henry, of course, from hearsay, for I was too young—only six years old—to feel or understand the changes that were taking place about me. Either fortune changed—capricious as she always is—or reckless of the losses he sustained in consequence of his wretchedness of mind, but most serious mishaps followed.

"His partners remonstrated, but in vain; the firm was

dissolved. I cannot dwell upon this painful topic. In less than four years after my poor mother's death, my father became bankrupt; his estates were all sold, his creditors were paid their demands in full, and a year after, he died of a broken heart—leaving me, most strange to say, with the debris of his noble fortune, to the care and guardianship of my uncle, Sir Christopher Vernon.

“Even before my father's death, I was looked upon with aversion by my uncle; the fault was certainly not mine, for up to this period, I had never seen him or any of his family. It was said, the baronet's aversion to me arose from his being the father of three girls, but no son—and the Vernon estates being strictly entailed, I was next heir to the title and property.

“I was just old enough, at my father's death, to feel the blow bitterly, and I was very soon made to feel it yet more cruelly. I remained, for some time, at the same school; but it was certainly no longer the same to me—at least, the master was no longer the same smiling attentive instructor; previously I only saw the rod, now I was made to feel it. You know my temper pretty well, Henry, therefore can imagine how I bore the change. My pranks and escapades, which formerly were overlooked, were now deemed the proofs of a vicious, idle disposition. I troubled myself very little, however, about the change in my master's mood and manner; I was a powerful, strong boy, capable of fighting my own battles, and with hopes of being able to push my way through the busy world.

“At the age of fourteen, without any regard to my inclination, or without consulting me on the subject, I was taken from school, and sent aboard his Majesty's ship, the ‘Reindeer,’ and rated a midshipman; and before I had time to look about me, the ship sailed for foreign service. Thus, Henry, you perceive, I had no act, or part, or choice, in becoming a sailor. Nevertheless, since it was my lot to be a sailor, a sailor I resolved to be, and set about learning the duties of one in good earnest. Now, you are aware, that during the six years we have

served together, in rough and smooth, I have done my duty; and but for that unsocial, vindictive brute Elliot, I might have really liked my profession; but he has made me almost detest it."

"Ah, Sid," said the fair-haired, handsome youth, "but for you, what a life should I have led, with all my ardour and love for a sailor's life; but for you—your strong arm shielded me for years from the tyranny of that big, surly savage. You nursed me in sickness—protected me in battle. You have been every thing to me; and now if you quit the service when we reach old England—adieu to my happiness."

"But my dear Henry," said Sidney Vernon, "I do not say I shall quit the service—I will certainly quit this ship, and so can you. Every craft in his Majesty's service is not like this. But hark—I hear the bell; enough of story-telling for to-night."

Sidney Vernon, as he ceased speaking, rose from his seat, and prepared to ascend upon deck. It was scarcely possible to behold a nobler or finer figure in the service—fully six feet high, and powerfully yet gracefully made, combining great activity with strength, and at this period scarcely twenty years of age. His features were remarkably fine, and extremely pleasing in expression, with very dark eyes and hair. He was a favourite with every one in the frigate, excepting the first lieutenant, and a midshipman named Elliot. The latter, some four years Sidney's senior, was of low birth, coarse manners, and brutal temper. He had passed his examination, and expected, on his return to England, to be made a lieutenant.

Elliot was about the middle height, with immense breadth of shoulder, huge limbs, and arms of singular length. Amongst the youngsters he was a tyrant and a bully. Let our readers recollect we are writing of the year 179—. The rules and regulations existing on board kings' ships were then widely different from the gentlemanly and well-ordered regulations of the year 1854.

High-spirited, independent, and perhaps a little reck-

less, and apt to give way to passion, Sidney Vernon was ill calculated to bear with the tyranny of Elliot without resistance; and he boldly, from the very first, refused to acknowledge him as his master. Elliot laughed at the fiery boy—insulted him—and, at first, when he resisted cruelly illused him. At the end of three years, however, Vernon mastered the bully, and fairly beat him. Then followed contempt on the one side, and bitter hatred on the other.

Henry Tressidder, a Cornish lad of good family and connections, was the chief butt of Elliot's brutality; he was two years younger than Vernon—tall, elegant in person, but slightly made, with fair complexion, and light flaxen curly hair. Notwithstanding a rather effeminate appearance, he was a manly, hardy boy—full of life and spirit, and dearly loving his profession. Sidney Vernon early learned to love him—took him under his protection—saved him from Elliot's brutality—and won an affection that never ceased during life.

A few days after the conversation related in the preceding pages, his Majesty's ship, *Reindeer*, anchored at Spithead, and shortly after, was paid off.

Just as the boat was leaving the ship, Sidney Vernon happened to look up. Gilbert Elliot was leaning over the side, looking with a glance of bitter malice at the two youths—their eyes met.

Vernon looked steadily into his enemy's face, not certainly with the intention or purpose of treasuring and imprinting upon his memory his ignoble and repulsive features—but hoping and trusting, and devoutly wishing that that might be the last time he should ever set eyes upon him.

With a loud laugh, and in a jeering tone Elliot cried—

"I trust, Master Vernon, you will not forget me—depend upon it, I shall not forget you—or the girl's face beside you—and perhaps when we meet again, you will be able to tell me how many pence in the pound your excellent father paid his creditors."

The hot blood rushed to the cheeks and temples of

Sidney Vernon. The words, coward and liar broke from his lips, and his foot was on the ladder to re-ascend, when the hand of Tressidder was laid upon his arm, and his gentle voice called out—

“Give way, men—give way.”

The boat shot from the side, and Henry said to his friend, in a low voice—

“Forgive me, Sid. It is better to restrain your feelings, than gratify that brute, by a public brawl at this moment.”

“You are right, Harry, quite right; but the day will come—I feel certain, when he and I shall meet,” and in a low voice he added, “And for the last time.”

On landing, the friends proceeded to the post-office, both expecting letters. There were several for Tressidder, from his father, mother, and sisters, and a gleam of heartfelt pleasure beamed through the tears that moistened his eyes as he hastily ran over the contents of these tokens of affection, after a lengthened absence.

On looking up, he caught the dark eyes of Vernon, fixed upon him with a saddened expression. In his hand, he held a short, business-like looking letter, from his uncle’s solicitor. Neither spoke until they entered a room at the Hotel.

“Sid,” began Henry, “here is a letter from my little sister—it is all about you. They got my letters from Barbadoes, and are aware how, through your watchful care, I escaped death from that fearful attack of yellow fever. They heard, too, of our action with the *Temeraire*; and how, when knocked overboard by a falling spar, you jumped into the sea, and kept me up—while the shots rattled about our ears like hail stones—and how that coward, Elliot, did everything he could to retard the boats picking us up, and”—

“Who in the name of goodness, told them all this?” asked Vernon. “For the affair of the *Temeraire* happened nearly a year after we left Barbadoes. And you sent no letter home.”

“You remember Bill Thomas, Little Bill as he was

always called, so tall that he could never enjoy an upright position aboard the Gun-brig, the Grampus, in which he was a middy?"

"Oh, yes, I remember little Bill, the best tempered slob in the Service," laughed Vernon, with all the thoughtlessness of youth, forgetting the sad ideas that the moment before filled his mind.

"Bill was left ill at Barbadoes," continued Tressidder. "We gave him a passage to D——, where he expected to join the Ranger. It was on the passage we fell in with the Temeraire; and afterwards he was with you, when Lieutenant Smallwood and you, with your gallant boat's crew, cut out the Vesta, from under the battery of——. When Bill did join the Ranger, she had received orders for home. Bill is a Cornish man, by the mother's side; and his family live near Truro—so while there, he called at my father's and gave them a full account of all our proceedings. So that mystery is explained. But here is a note from my dear old father to yourself; he is anxious to see you, and all my sisters are dying to behold their brother's preserver."

"By Jove, there's more danger in visiting your good father, than in cutting out the Vesta, for I dare say your fair sisters are a handsome resemblance of your own good-looking self. Dangerous service for a poor and rather susceptible Mid."

Henry blushed, for though a Mid, he could blush.

"Oh, never mind the danger, Sid, you are accustomed to that."

"Your good father," said Vernon, finishing Mr. Tressidder's letter, "writes most kindly, and it will indeed give me great pleasure to join you in Cornwall; I must, however, first to London, for that laconic strange letter from Sir Christopher Vernon's solicitor, requests my presence as speedily as possible. You intend going to-night in the dock-yard lighter that sails for Falmouth. I will go to London by the mail, and in four or five days I will join you in Falmouth. We can then talk over our future prospects, for I suppose we shall soon be afloat

again, and I shall have passed my examination," and thus the two midshipmen parted.

CHAPTER II.

THE day after his arrival in London, Sidney Vernon proceeded towards the residence of his uncle's solicitor, Mr. Boodle, in Brook-street. He was extremely anxious, for many reasons, for an interview with that gentleman. In the first place, his purse was extremely consumptive, and his wardrobe neither extensive, or in very good order. He wished to ascertain, too, what sum of money had been reserved for him from the wreck of his father's property.

Proceeding leisurely along the streets, occasionally inquiring his way, he came to Bond-street, and entering Brook-street, paused to look at No. 30; for young as he was, Sidney Vernon was in the habit of judging men by their outward signs, and he considered it not impossible to form an idea of the owner of a house by its external appearance.

It was a large and respectable style of building, but seemed sadly neglected; the windows appeared as if they had not been cleaned or even dusted for years; nor its hall door to have suffered the infliction of a painter's brush since its erection.

"I suspect," thought Vernon, "I shall have a queer customer to deal with here." He gave a pull at a very crazy bell, and after some difficulty raised the knocker, making the old door shake with the effort. After a time, which tried the patience of the young sailor, the door opened, and the bald head and wrinkled face of a little old man, in a marvellously old-fashioned dress, made its appearance. He stood blocking up the half-opened

door, winking and blinking the smallest possible pair of grey eyes, and pursing up in so singular a manner a very large mouth, that the young sailor burst into a hearty laugh, saying—

“Well, old gentleman, now that you have examined me from stem to stern, pray let me in; I wish to see Mr. Boodle—this is his house, I suppose.”

“Yes, whose else would you have it, eh? What do you want with him?”

“I do not want to rob him, old fellow; so open the door.”

“I don’t know that,” growled the old man, “it’s likely enough; I haven’t lived in Lunnun fifty-four years with my eyes shut. Neighbour Wilkinson was done the other day by a great tall chap, with gold lace on his coat. He let him into the parlour, went to call his master; when he came back—chap with the gold lace was gone—so were a dozen of silver spoons and a watch. No, no, I don’t like chaps with bits of dirty gold lace on their collars; I ain’t going to be done.”

“Why, you old bear,” said the young sailor, half laughing—half angry, “what the deuce do you take me for?”

“For a sarvant, of course, with that tinsel on your collar.”

“Well, you are tolerably correct there—I am, certainly, his Majesty’s servant.”

“I thought so; not a bit the better for that—no better than another.”

Getting tired of the old man’s loquacity, and putting his hand to the door he pushed it open, saying—

“Go, old man, and tell your master that Mr. Vernon, nephew of Sir Christopher Vernon, wishes to see him.”

“Eh? what?” said the old servant, falling back; “are you the young sailor chap master expects? Why did not you say so, and not keep me all day talking at the door? I did not expect to see you in such a dress as that.”

A midshipman’s coat, at that period, was certainly neither very elegant, nor a very distinguished article of

apparel. Sidney Vernon's was rather the worse for foreign service, and the bit of lace considerably tarnished.

The old domestic conducted our hero through the hall, and opening the door of the parlour, said aloud :

"Here's Master Vernon, the middy, you said as how you expected some day or other."

Vernon looked at the person thus addressed, and beheld a tall, lanky, middle-aged man, with a remarkably pinched, parsimonious-looking countenance, habited in a snuff-coloured suit, with a wig of an indescribable colour. He was seated on a high stuffed chair, before a large mahogany table, covered with papers, and having sundry curious looking drawers underneath. The sides of the room were decorated with japanned tin cases, piled one over another, and each having a name painted on it. The two windows, as well as the whole apartment, were so covered with dust as to almost extinguish the daylight; and though the day was a raw, cold one in March, there was scarcely a sign of fire in the grate.

"Pray take a chair, Master Vernon," said the solicitor, in a dry, husky voice, "I expected to see you immediately after the arrival of your ship."

Sidney took the only chair unoccupied in the room, saying at the same time :

"I have lost no time, I assure you, Mr. Boodle, for I was anxious to know what my uncle's commands are, and what chance I have of getting afloat again. I hope Sir Christopher and his family are all well."

"Sir Christopher Vernon," said Mr. Boodle, looking the young sailor keenly in the face, "is remarkably well; he has been on the Continent the last two years. I suppose you are not aware of the happy event that has occurred in the baronet's family."

"No," replied the young sailor, "I do not imagine that it was of sufficient importance to cross the Atlantic."

"Humph!" muttered the lawyer, "nevertheless it's news that would spoil the appetite of many a gay youth. Sir Christopher Vernon has been blessed with an heir to his title and estates."

"By Jove! better late than never," said the middy with a smile; "I wish him joy—may he have a dozen. I assure you, Mr. Boodle, the news will have no effect on my appetite, which I am happy to inform you is extremely good, our diet for the last six months not having been of the best description; which you would find, my dear sir, were I to place my feet under your mahogany."

Mr. Boodle pressed his thin lips hard, and looked for a moment in the youth's face with an expression of contempt, while he muttered some words not very distinctly, but which sounded very like an oath, that our hero should never satisfy his appetite at his expense.

"I am desired," said the lawyer, after a pause, "by Sir Christopher Vernon, when you come of age, to hand over to you a statement of your late father's affairs. The money left, after paying all his debts in full, has been placed out at interest for your benefit; and I am to remit you half-yearly, until you reach your majority, the sum of sixty pounds, which Sir Christopher considers, with your pay, quite sufficient for your support."

"Very good, sir," replied Sidney, quite pleased to find that he had something to look forward to besides his pay, and, in fact, mentally considering himself in very affluent circumstances. One hundred and twenty pounds a-year to a young midshipman, hoping shortly to be a lieutenant, appeared a very respectable income.

"I shall now hand over to you the amount of your first half-year," said Mr. Boodle, opening a drawer and taking out a bundle of notes, "and you will find that you will immediately be appointed to another ship. Your uncle has interested himself in your future welfare."

"Exceedingly obliged to him," said the young sailor, "especially as I never had the pleasure of either seeing or hearing from my worthy uncle."

"You will please to count those notes, and sign that paper," said Mr. Boodle, placing both before him.

"Just the ticket—old chap," Sidney was going to say, but substituted old gentleman, which title, however, did not seem to please the lawyer, for the words "young sea-

bear," was muttered rather audibly, as our hero thrust the notes into his pocket, and rose to retire, wishing the solicitor good morning.

"Humph," muttered Boodle, "considers himself a Cræsus, with sixty pounds in his pocket—thinks nothing of losing a title and fifteen thousand a-year!"

Sidney found the old man waiting in the hall to show him out.

"There, old Cerberus," said the youth, "there is something to take the cobwebs out of your throat," and putting a crown piece into the old man's palm, he gave him a squeeze with his muscular hand, that caused the old domestic to caper about the hall, wringing his hand for some moments after the departure of the laughing midshipman.

Vernon's first business was to get a complete refit, which occupied him, together with sight-seeing, the best part of ten days, the time passing pleasantly enough. He soon discovered, however, that sixty pounds, in London, was, after all, but a mere trifle; so at the end of a fortnight he packed up his traps and started by the mail for Falmouth.

Tressidder House, the residence of Henry Tressidder's father, was a fine old family mansion, situated upon the sloping bank, forming the northern side of that large estuary, (part of Falmouth harbour,) which runs up past Milor to the mouth of the Fal, or, as it is generally termed, "The Truro River." This sheet of water, at full tide, resembles a lake, being completely shut in from the sea. To the westward is the picturesque hamlet and church of Milor, and directly opposite is the village of St. Just. The views from Tressidder House are exceedingly beautiful, for looking across the low land, beyond St. Just's, a noble view of the ocean, and the distant range of bold coast extending to the westward, is obtained. To the east of the mansion, the richly wooded hills of Lord Falmouth's domains greatly add to the beauty of the prospect. Nor are the views confined to pictures of still life, for the windows command a clear

sight of the entrance to Carrick roads, where frigates and line-of-battle ships frequently anchor.

CHAPTER III.

It was the first week in April, and the morning which shone on the events recorded in this chapter was remarkably beautiful; not a cloud floated over the fair blue sky, whilst a gentle west wind just curled the mimic waves of the broad sheet of water stretched out in glorious sunshine before Tressidder House.

"Come, girls," said Henry Tressidder, entering the drawing-room where his sisters and their favourite companion, Louise Mendoza, a girl of thirteen, a distant connection of both the Vernons and Tressidder, and of Spanish extraction on the father's side, were amusing themselves. "Who's for a pull in the gig, it's a lovely day, and I should not be at all surprised if we picked up Sidney Vernon at Truro; I have been expecting him the last three days—he's sure to pull down the river in a boat, or walk along its banks."

"Oh, we'll all go," exclaimed the girls, throwing aside their work.

"You have quite distracted us," said Rosa, the second sister, "about this hero of yours. Now mark me, Harry, if he fall off one degree from your enthusiastic description of him, you will catch it from us all."

"Ah, dear Rosa," said the sweet, soft voice of Mary, the youngest of the sisters, "he will always be handsome in our eyes, let him be what he may. Did he not twice save dear Harry's life?"

"By Jove, that he did, Mary, twenty times, if the truth is to be told, for I was always in some scrape or other, out of which noble-hearted Sid always pulled me.

I am so deuced glad he passed his examination with such éclat. He'll be made lieutenant soon. We should have had him with us ere now, but just as he was on the point of starting, a fortnight ago, he received orders to repair to Portsmouth. I am sure we shall meet him to-day, so now who is for the gig."

"Oh," said Jane, "but will not your friend think us rather—"

"Tut, nonsense," interrupted Henry, "I know what you were going to say. Don't be afraid, he won't fancy you intend a crusade against his heart. Sid turned the heads of half the girls in Barbadoes, black, white, and brown; but he won't lose his heart very easily, so don't think to take him by storm; and now make haste—time and tide, you know—"

In less than half an hour the handsome gig belonging to Mr. Tressidder was pulling away at a rapid pace up the Truro river, with Henry, his two sisters, and Louise, sitting chatting and laughing in the stern sheets.

What an enlivening and delightful—what a varied and beautifully picturesque row is that up the windings of the Fal, to the prettily situated town of Truro. The water so deep that a frigate might float up it as far as Lord Falmouth's beautiful domain. The frequent bends in the river from King Harry's Reach to Truro—the thick woods covering the hills—the parti-coloured rocks bordering the stream—and lastly, the large expanse of water—when the tide is full in—that flows in one noble sheet from the last bend to the town of Truro. To the little party gliding towards that town, all these beauties were familiar, but the buoyancy of youth gave to each object a bright interest. In high spirits they reached Truro, landed at the quay, where Henry parted from his sisters and proceeded to the hotel in search of his friend, the young ladies going to the — Parade to visit a lady and her daughters, with whom they were intimately acquainted.

Not dreaming of danger, but gaily chatting, the girls were crossing the foot of the wide street that leads up a

very steep acclivity—the coach road to Falmouth—when they were startled by the Falmouth mail descending the hill, the horses tearing along at a furious pace, unchecked by the controlling hand of the coachman. Terrified and bewildered by their danger, and losing all presence of mind, they attempted to cross the road, in doing which, Louise Mendoza stumbled and fell prostrate, directly in the path of the runaway horses; her fate would have been sealed the next moment, had not a tall, powerful-looking man rushed to her rescue; but too late to take her in his arms and retreat, he caught her up with his left hand whilst with his right he seized the bridal of the near leader, and with a powerful jerk turned him on one side; the next instant the coach overturned on the opposite side; the young man staggering with the shock, and almost falling, but still bearing the half-fainting girl in his arms unhurt. A crowd soon gathered round them, and Harry Tressidder burst through the throng, exclaiming—

“Good God, Sidney, how providential—this way—follow me.”

And hurrying across the street, he knocked at the door of a handsome private house, the residence of the lady the Miss Tressidders were going to visit.

Vernon, who had arrived in the town not long before, by the day mail, was strolling across the street leading to the quay, to look for a boat, when he observed Louise fall before the affrighted horses; active and powerful, and rarely, if ever, losing his presence of mind, he rushed to her assistance.

He now bore the young girl into the mansion, where she was at once surrounded by the Miss Tressidders, and the lady of the house—all pale with fright and trembling with anxiety—but, excepting a few very slight scratches, and a bruise or two, Louise was unhurt, and soon recovered, when, fixing her young, expressive eyes upon the flushed and strikingly handsome features of her preserver, said, in a sweet, childish voice—

“You do not know, Mr. Vernon, that you have saved

a little cousin from being trampled to death; I shall never forget your courage and kindness in doing so.

Sidney looked surprised at the words of the young girl; but, kissing her cheek, he said, gaily—

“Our cousinship is, at all events, from this day firmly established.”

And then turning to Henry Tressider, he requested an explanation of Louise’s words.

Henry gave the required elucidation, followed up by an introduction to his sisters; and then saying—

“Now, Sidney, we have no more time for ceremony—the tide’s falling—our boat is at the quay—so send the porter at the inn down with your traps—there is no time to lose.”

In less than half an hour, the whole party were sailing down the river, chatting, laughing, and as well acquainted with each other, as months of ordinary intercourse often warrant.

Happy youth! why should old age look with a jealous eyes as it sometimes does, upon its light-hearted joyous gaiety, calling the natural impulses of hearts full of life and love, frivolity and giddiness; the season of youth, especially that of the female, is short—with them the cares of life begin early.

Three months, the happiest of his life, were passed by Sidney Vernon at Tressidder House, when suddenly the summons of departure was sounded. Reluctantly this summons was received; but unwilling as they were to leave the place where they were so happy, it was a pleasure to the friends to find themselves appointed to join the same ship; for Mr. Tressidder had secretly been exerting his interest for that purpose, and with something of alacrity they prepared to join the “Penelope Frigate,” fitting out at Plymouth, to unite with the fleet in the Mediterranean; war with the French Directory having been declared.

“Well, Mary,” said Henry Tressidder, to his youngest sister, as they strolled across the lawn, “we sail to-morrow in a dock-yard lighter; for we want three or

four days in Plymouth to ourselves, before we join the *Penelope*."

"Heaven knows, Harry, when you may return. Your ship is under orders for the Mediterranean, is she not?" said Mary.

"Yes," returned her brother; "and a jolly fine cruise we shall have. The *Penelope* is a crack frigate—we shall take lots of prizes—plenty of cash—and a brush every week with the new-fangled tricolour of revolutionary France. Oh, Sid, you are looking as serious as a pickled pilchard."

"I have been so happy," said Sidney Vernon, "these last three months, that it has spoiled me; and having found a little cousin,"—(he looked affectionately at Louise)—"I feel more interest in the world than before. Now mind me, Louise," he continued, sitting down beside the little girl, and drawing her towards him—"mind, you must always consider me as your protector—we are both parentless—while I live you shall never want help or assistance—so do not forget cousin Sidney—and depend on it, he wont forget his pretty cousin Louise."

And stooping, he would have kissed her brow, but the child threw her arms around his neck, and kissed his cheek, saying, with tears in her eyes—

"Forget you, Sidney, I never will; but I fear, in the great world, and amid the perils you are going to meet, poor little Louise will fade from your memory."

Sidney shook his head, saying—

"We shall see, Louise—that is, if Johnny Crapaud leaves my head on my shoulders," he added, laughing.

Louise shuddered, and turned pale.

"Ah, Sidney, what excuse on earth can people find in their hearts for killing each other—for what half the world do not know."

"Oh," said Henry, laughing; "we shoot one another for a great many reasons; we are going to shoot the French now, because they have changed their white flag for one of three colours, red, white, and blue, which, by the bye, looks much better than the old table-cloth we used to have a pop at."

There was a gloomy silence within the chambers of Tressidder House the following evening, for the two friends had sailed for Plymouth. The piano was closed, the harp stood neglected, and Mr. and Mrs. Tressidder sat conversing in a low tone by the bay-window, while the girls plied their needles, with only a sentence now and then between them. It was a great change from the evenings of the previous three months. Then, the hours had passed like magic, for Sidney Vernon was of an exceedingly cheerful spirit—sung well—had a fine voice, and played the flute better than most people. As to Henry, he possessed exuberant spirits; and several young girls from Falmouth, and the vicinity, frequently visited them; and then the merry dance and the merry laugh resounded through the house, to the delight of the old couple, who loved to see cheerful faces round them; while boating parties to Helford Creek—to the famous Gull-rock, and the Lizard light-house, engrossed the days. The Tressidders were a happy family, and made all around their residence as happy as their affluent circumstances allowed.

The young men, too, felt the change, as they paced the deck of the heavy old craft in which they were ploughing their way to Plymouth. Vernon was for some time unusually silent, at last he said—

“Did you hear, Henry, who was the captain of the *Penelope*—any of the names of the officers—and what sort of ship she is?”

“A crack frigate, *Sid*; and I was told yesterday, that her commander, Captain Blackwood, is as gallant a fellow as ever lived. Old Commodore Fisher told me all I picked up about her. The discipline is strict, but according to rule; she carries thirty-six guns, and is remarkably fast; I heard none of the officer’s names—indeed I believe they were not known to any one in Falmouth; but by twelve o’clock to-morrow, if this dull brute does not go to sleep on the way, we shall find out for ourselves.”

They, however, reached Plymouth by daylight, and the

young men proceeded on shore, and immediately after breakfast they went to pay the *Penelope* a visit, or rather to report themselves on board.

At this period the noble Breakwater was not begun. The *Penelope* was lying at anchor in the Sound, and as they approached, they had an opportunity of taking a slight view of their future home. The *Penelope* was a beautiful vessel to look upon; she sat gracefully and easily on the water, and her tall spars and square yards, so trim and rakish, gave to her appearance a regular man-of-war look.

"She's a handsome craft, Sid," said Henry Tressidder. "And a clipper, no doubt."

The next moment the boat touched the vessel, several heads appeared over the gangway, as the two friends ascended the side; but scarcely had Sidney Vernon put foot upon the deck, than his glance rested on his old enemy, Gilbert Elliot; utterly astounded by this unexpected vision, Sidney stood for an instant irresolute; the next Elliot had advanced, with a look of intense satisfaction and malice on his coarse features, saying:

"What an unexpected pleasure! When we parted, Mister Sidney Vernon, and Master Henry Tressidder, I little supposed we were destined again to be comrades. I only hope you find yourselves equally delighted with my presence, for I have the pleasure to inform you, I am appointed third lieutenant to the *Penelope*."

Sidney Vernon's first impulse was to knock his sneering enemy down; the next was to turn round and quit the ship; but scorning to show he feared the presence of his enemy, or that his satirical tone and words had any effect upon him, he mastered his emotion and fiery temper, and merely replied in a calm tone:

"As you say, it is quite an unexpected pleasure—I fear the cup will overflow before long." And walking forward, he went upon the quarter-deck, and enquired of the steward if Captain Blackwood was on board, as he had letters for him.

"He is in his state-room, sir," said the steward, looking

with some surprise at the stately figure and handsome face of the enquirer. "Who shall I say?"

"Pooh!" said Lieutenant Elliot, coming up, "they are only the two supernumerary mids that we expected to join us before we sailed. You need not trouble Captain Blackwood, the first lieutenant will be on board directly, he will settle the matter, and assign to them their quarters."

"I will thank you to give my message to Captain Blackwood," said Vernon, with a flushed cheek, yet keeping his temper.

As he spoke, a tall, handsome man, in the prime of life, ascended from the cabin, and coming forward, said in a very polite tone:

"I thought I heard you say, sir, you had letters for me."

"I have a letter from Admiral Fisher, and another from his brother, Commodore Fisher, for Captain Blackwood," said Sidney Vernon; "am I wrong in supposing you are that gentleman? My friend and myself received orders to join your ship, and lost no time in obeying."

"Ha!" said Captain Blackwood, with a pleased smile, "then you are no doubt Mr. Sidney Vernon; you and your friend are welcome on board the *Penelope*. I have heard of you before, Mr. Vernon, and with high praise. You have passed your examination, and I find you are only sent on board the *Penelope* for this cruise; no doubt you will be made before the year is out. We do not sail for a few days, perhaps a week; therefore, if you have any purchases, or prefer returning ashore, you have full liberty to do so; the signal for sailing will be hoisted twenty-four hours before departure."

Pleased with the manner and tone of his future commander, Sidney replied, he would with his friend return ashore, and be ready for departure at the appointed time.

The captain then retired to read his letters, which were in truth mere letters of introduction. Admiral Fisher and his brother being very intimate with, and old

comrades of Captain Blackwood, who had served first under Admiral Fisher; and both brothers visiting at Tressidder House, had taken a special liking to our hero, and determined to serve him if they could.

CHAPTER IV

Six months have passed since the events recorded in our last chapter; and the saucy Penelope is ploughing the broad waters of the "dark blue sea." Perfectly satisfied with his reception by the gallant Captain Blackwood, Vernon came to the determination of keeping his temper under every kind of provocation from Lieutenant Elliot, though the struggle was often great for a young man of noble birth and spirit, and who had distinguished himself on many occasions, to submit to the petty tyranny of a low-born upstart. Jealous of his nephew, Sir Christopher Vernon would exert no interest to promote his advancement, but on the contrary, used that interest in favour of another, who had no claim upon him, excepting that he helped to further his own views.

Gilbert Elliot's father was a wealthy merchant tailor, a keen man of business, and ardently desirous of rising in station, and above his profession, not in his own person, but by means of his son. One of his most extravagant customers was the youngest son of Lord S—, an officer in the — regiment of Lancers, and the most dissipated youth about town. Mr. Elliot not only obliged the Honorable Frederick S— with an unlimited supply of every kind of uniform necessary, but also an unlimited supply of cash, on the young gentleman's acceptance of sundry small slips of paper, with stamps on the end thereof, till at last the amount staggered the youth himself, and fairly horrified his worthy father.

“Well, my lord,” said the bowing and smiling tailor, eyeing his lordship’s dismayed countenance, “the account can be very easily balanced. I have a son, who is extremely desirous of serving his country; if your lordship will get him appointed to a ship, and promise, when he has passed his examination, he shall be made lieutenant, I will throw these bills into the fire.”

And in the fire they went—Lord S—— declaring with animation, and shaking the delighted tailor by the hand—that he was an honour to his profession; Lord S—— applied to Sir Christopher Vernon, and Gilbert Elliot became a midshipman, and then a lieutenant on board the same ship with Sidney Vernon.

Captain Blackwood was an old school-fellow of Sir Christopher Vernon’s, who wrote, requesting him to receive his nephew on board his ship, stating that it was his desire to detach him from the service; that it was contrary to his wishes that he continued in the navy; that he was a headstrong, passionate, and wilful youth, thoughtless and extravagant; and that he (the baronet) thought the best way to wean him from the service, was to keep him a midshipman, till he got disgusted. Now Captain Blackwood thought Sir Christopher Vernon was extremely anxious for his nephew’s welfare; and being very willing to oblige his titled friend, also received Gilbert Elliot as his third lieutenant, and Sidney Vernon, who might otherwise have filled that post, remained a midshipman, without a chance of promotion. The first lieutenant of the *Penelope*, Mr. Hobhouse, was a first-rate officer, extremely strict, very gentlemanly, but unfortunately easily prejudiced. Elliot, crafty and plausible when he pleased, contrived to poison the first lieutenant’s mind against Vernon; well aware, that if Lieutenant Hobhouse showed any coolness and reserve towards him, it would be likely to last, as Sidney was of too proud a nature to bend to, or seek for intercourse with any man who showed a disposition to shun him or treat him with coolness. During the six months he had passed in the *Penelope*, Vernon confined himself strictly to his duty,

and made no kind of attempt to win the first lieutenant from his distant manner; whilst Elliot certainly sought every opportunity, consistent with his duty, to annoy the two friends. There are a thousand ways on board a ship, for a superior to annoy an inferior in rank, even if strictly doing his duty; especially at the period of which we write. Now every officer in the service is a gentleman in his conduct towards others, and the free, open-hearted sailor shines in the drawing-room, without having lost his individuality; the polish only giving additional lustre to those qualities which has made the British Navy the glory of England and the model of valour throughout the world. But enough of digression. We said at the commencement of the chapter, that the Penelope, returning from Majorca, was ploughing her way over the broad waters of the Mediterranean to join the British fleet cruising off Malta. It was a fine night, the wind blowing briskly from the westward, and the frigate, sailing under her single reefed topsails, had approached much nearer the island than the captain had imagined, for a thick haze was over the water, and the moon was down—when a cry from the look out, “large ship on our starboard quarter,” roused all hands to activity. It was well known that Vice-Admiral Decies had hoisted his flag on board the *William Tell*, a fine ship of eighty-four guns, and intended, if possible, to get out of Malta, and Captain Blackwood, who very well knew that none of the British ships would be scudding before the wind, with lower studding sails set at that hour of the night, as they were keeping a strict blockade of the port, came to the conclusion that the ship-of-war, then clearly made out, was the *William Tell*, and that probably they were quite close to some of the English squadron.

It was a desperate resolve to attack a vessel mounting eighty-four guns, with a frigate carrying only thirty-six, but there was no hesitation. With his usual gallantry Captain Blackwood ordered the reefs to be shaken out of the top sails, the top gallant sails set, a gun fired to warn any of the vessels in the vicinity where the chase was,

and then the Penelope squared away her yards and pursued her formidable opponent.

"My eyes, Jem," said an old sailor, to a comrade, "won't we have pepper and spice to our mess before morning."

"Aigh, aigh, old boy, if she be the William Tell as I seed at Alexandria, she'll give us a belly full; but we'll give her something in return, or my name aint Jem."

As the vessel flew over the foaming water in pursuit, Sidney Vernon and several midshipmen were busy forward getting their bow chasers ready for action, for they were fast gaining upon the majestic fabric before them. The French ship had a cloud of canvass set, notwithstanding the strong wind and uneasy sea.

"We shall be within hitting distance in a few minutes, Sid," said Henry Tressidder, joining his friend, who was actively engaged with a party of sailors in running out the guns. "Our captain's a gallant fellow to follow that big chap before us."

"If we can only cripple her, Harry, till some of the others come up, we shall have her; now, my men, out with her."

Just then Lieutenant Elliot came up, and in a bullying tone said—

"What are you youngsters jawing there about, can't you do your work without slacking your jaw tackle. Go aft, sir," he continued, slightly pushing against Sidney Vernon, as if by accident. "Mr. Hobhouse has something else for you to do besides delaying the men."

Just as Lieutenant Elliot spoke, a bright flash shot from the stern of the William Tell; the same instant crash went the cap of the bowsprit, the pieces were sent flying on board, while the ball continued its course, knocking a huge splinter out of the foremast, but doing no other damage.

There was a suppressed laugh amongst the men forward, as Lieutenant Elliot turned sharp round, and by the light of the lanterns was seen hurrying towards the quarter deck. All now became engaged in a scene

of excitement and activity. Captain Blackwood commenced firing into the stern of the French ship, which still continued to scud before the wind, returning the fire from her stern chasers, striking the *Penelope* many times, and wounding several men; but still she pursued her gigantic opponent during the entire night, and about six in the morning brought down her main top mast. A loud cheer broke from the crew of the *Penelope*, when this shot told. At daylight they perceived a large ship coming down before the wind, which proved to be the *Lion*, sixty-four guns, and behind her the *Foudroyant*, eighty-four. Determined to do all the mischief he could before these ships came up, Captain Blackwood ranged his vessel directly up under the stern of the *William Tell*, and poured in upon her crowded decks the whole of the starboard guns; receiving, in return, a tremendous broadside, which, singular to say, did little or no damage.

The last discharge from the frigate's gun completely brought the *William Tell* to bay—flight was no longer possible—for so persevering and well-directed were the guns of the *Penelope*, that every shot almost told on the rigging and spars of the French ship.

“Who pointed the gun that brought down the main topmast of the enemy's ship?” demanded Captain Blackwood of Lieutenant Elliot, as he came upon the quarter-deck.

Elliot knew the gun was run out by Sidney Vernon's orders, and that he himself directed the aim, but he replied carelessly—

“I believe, sir, it was a chance shot.”

“I do not think that,” said Captain Blackwood. “You look very pale, Mr. Elliot,” he added, as the strong light of a ship's lantern fell on his face; “were you hit by that last shot?”

“Struck on the arm by a splinter, sir,” replied the lieutenant; “but only a stunning kind of blow—it's passing off.”

Mr. Hobhouse, the first lieutenant, came up at the moment, saying—

That young man Vernon has a keen eye—his first shot brought down the French vessel's topmast, and his last has settled the enemy for flight. We must keep clear of her broadside, sir," added the first lieutenant, "now she finds flight impossible, she will be a dangerous customer."

"Here is the *Lion* coming up rapidly," said Captain Blackwood; "let us pass under her stern, and give her a broadside, before she's able to clear away the wreck of her spars and sails."

The *Penelope* went in stays in splendid style, receiving a running kind of fire from the crippled French vessel, which had left Malta, and succeeded in escaping the ships blockading the port. Being a very fast vessel, she would have escaped the *Lion*, or even the *Foudroyant*, one of the finest ships in the British Navy, had not the little *Penelope* outsailed her, and with daring courage, engaged her singly.

The *Lion* ran on till within pistol shot of the enemy—and the *William Tell* having cleared for action, and determined to fight to the last—a tremendous fire was kept up between the two line-of-battle ships, the *Penelope*, completely under command, crossing her stern, and pouring in the broadside with deadly precision; still her officers and men suffered—for the French captain, enraged at the pertinacity of his gallant little opponent, succeeded in raking her, as she went between him and the *Lion*, whose rigging and sails were so cut to pieces as to force her to retire for a while to repair damages.

In this discharge from the *William Tell*, the first lieutenant, Mr. Hobhouse, was badly wounded, and the second and third lieutenant so hurt as to be unable to keep the deck.

Captain Blackwood immediately appointed Sidney Vernon acting lieutenant for the time, and so well and gallantly, and with such consummate skill did he handle the *Penelope*, that when Captain Blackwood was knocked down by a splinter, the entire command of the frigate fell upon him and the master.

The wind increasing, and the *Lion* having repaired

damages, bore down upon her opponent, who was still under some sort of control, her mizen and foremast being uninjured. The William Tell made a bold effort to board the Lion, but being prevented by their bowsprits getting entangled she poured a deadly broadside into her, which left not a sail available; her rigging cut to pieces, and her mainmast ready to go by the board, she was compelled to fall back.

Determined to completely cripple the William Tell, and to give time to the Foudroyant to come up, Sidney Vernon, highly excited, but perfectly cool, said a few words to the crew, in encouragement, and determined again to pass under the stern of the enemy's ship, and aim his entire broadside, to cut away her mizenmast.

But boldly the French commander resolved to frustrate this attempt, by pouring on her his whole broadside, hoping, if he could get rid of his gallant little antagonist, to escape before the Foudroyant, which was to leeward, could come up.

Young as he was, Sidney Vernon was too good a sailor, and too well aware of the terrible consequences of receiving the broadside of a line-of-battle-ship, not to take every precaution to avoid such a catastrophe. The master was also a first-rate seaman: and just as the William Tell yawed and brought her broadside to bear, the Penelope shot up into the wind like a meteor, passed directly across the stern of the French ship, within less than pistol shot, and having elevated her guns, poured her whole broadside into their enraged opponent. Down came the mizenmast, with the whole of its hamper of yards, sails, and rigging, falling fore and aft the ship, creating considerable confusion.

At this juncture, the Foudroyant came up, and hailed the William Tell, calling out to her to strike, and at the same time pouring into her a deadly fire. Still, so determined was the resistance of the gallant Captain Laurier, who fought the William Tell, that the fire of the Foudroyant was at once returned, and so well worked were the Frenchman's guns and so high-spirited the

crew, that in less than an hour, the *Foudroyant* lost her mizenmast, and was so desperately mauled fore and aft, her fore-topmast having fallen, that she was forced to sheer off.

Astonishing as it may appear, up to this moment, the Penelope was uninjured, and Captain Blackwood, having recovered from the stunning effects of the blow he had received, came upon deck, and resumed the command of the ship,

But there was little left to do; the enemy's ship, quite unmanageable, rolled heavily in the deep troughs of the sea, her lower port-holes closed, her decks overflowing with blood, her captain dangerously wounded. Just as the Penelope reached ahead, prepared to rake her, the flag was struck, and the *William Tell* surrendered to the only one of the three opposing vessels able to take possession of her.

Captain Blackwood came up to Sidney Vernon, and shaking him by the hand, said, in a loud tone—

“You are an honour to the British Navy. You fought this ship in my absence as well as any man in the service could. I have been misled—but no matter now. You must board the *William Tell*; we must manage that you have a crew—we will set her sufficiently to rights, so that you can take her to Syracuse. Your friend Tressidder may accompany you.”

Four hours after, the *William Tell* was scudding before the wind, under jury masts, for Syracuse, where she arrived without accident or adventure—the capture remaining a memorable triumph for the officers and crew of the little saucy Penelope.

CHAPTER V.

EIGHTEEN months have passed since the action between the Penelope and the William Tell; and now the former is urging her way through the boisterous Bay of Biscay on her passage home. We must be brief in this part of our narrative, for we have many and strange vicissitudes to record in the varied life of Sidney Vernon, before we bring our tale to a conclusion; and we would have passed over those eighteen months without notice, had not an incident occurred during that period, and whilst the vessel was lying at anchor in Smyrna roads, that probably changed the whole course of his career.

Lieutenant Elliot, after the action between their frigate and the William Tell, heard, with feelings of intense jealousy and hatred, the encomiums and praises bestowed upon Sidney Vernon for his gallant conduct in action, and his skill in saving the Penelope from the attempts of the line-of-battle ship to sink her. Captain Blackwood, being taken seriously ill, was obliged to resign his command of the frigate, and his successor was one of the most tyrannical commanders in the service, and certainly one of the most needy and avaricious. Lieutenant Elliot became an especial favourite, for he gave dinners on shore, and lent money freely when it was to carry out a purpose.

Backed by Captain R——, Lieutenant Elliot ventured to begin his system of annoying Sidney, who had to bear the brunt of the new commander's brutality; the men themselves murmured, feeling the difference between their late commander and their present.

Henry Tressidder exerted himself to keep his loved friend from giving way to passion; but one evening, as Sidney Vernon and Henry Tressidder were seated enjoying an ice at one of the then fashionable coffee-houses in

Smyrna, Lieutenant Elliot came in with three or four young officers, toadies of his acquaintance, sufficiently aristocratic to induce him to pay for their limes and ices. Elliot was considerably excited, and slightly intoxicated—but yet quite conscious of his sayings and doings; though a tall and a strong man, he was yet unable to contend, personally, with Vernon; he knew also that Vernon was a sure and deadly shot, and quite a match for any foreigner with the small sword—then greatly used.

That evening, however, he was blind to consequences; as he advanced into the crowded coffee-room, he perceived Vernon's hat on a small table near where he sat. Calling the waiter in an imperious tone, he ordered him to bring wine and ices; and drawing the marble table towards him, with a dash of his hand he knocked the hat into the middle of the floor, saying, in a loud tone—

“D—— the fellow that owns it—why doesn't he hang his hat on a peg.”

Sidney Vernon picked up his hat, while an ominous silence ensued. All those who knew the parties, and there were many English officers in the room, looked on with curiosity; but Vernon, quietly wiping the dust from his hat, continued his conversation with his friend Henry, who trembled with anxiety.

Elliot and his friends burst into a laugh; and some words caught Henry's ear; but Vernon paid no attention.

Presently, the waiter brought a salver with ices and wine, and those costly Venetian glasses—favourites in Smyrna at that time—and placed them on the marble table before Lieutenant Elliot and his aristocratic companions.

Vernon rose from his seat; there was not the slightest flush on his very handsome features, and his tall and powerful frame struck all present, as he slowly advanced, took up the tray with its glittering contents, and tossed it into the middle of the room—smashing every article on it to atoms. Every one sprung to their feet, while Elliot alone remained seated, apparently stupefied.

“Now, sir,” said Vernon, in a loud distinct tone,

"call the waiter, and pay for those articles at once—a trifling atonement for your unwarrantable insolence; and if you do not, with this cane,"—and he took up a rather formidable looking one belonging to one of the gentlemen—"I will not leave two inches of skin on your carcase without a mark of my just indignation."

There was a dead silence. Elliot was completely crest-fallen; an arrant coward at heart, he quailed before the stern glance of the insulted Vernon. At length, pale and livid in features, he dashed several gold pieces on the table—more than sufficient to pay for the damage—and rushed from the café.

"Sir, you have taken an unwarrantable liberty with my cane," said a short dapper young gentleman, in plain clothes, the son of a rich British merchant settled in Smyrna—flushing up in the face, and putting himself into a very dignified position. Sidney Vernon had heard the words this young gentleman had made use of, when he found Vernon took no notice of the insult he had received. He looked down with a smile upon the speaker, saying—

"Sir, you ought to be thankful I did not break this stick on your good friend's back; and that instead of taking your stick, I did not take you by the ear, which I assuredly will do if you do not follow your companion."

There was a general titter through the room, amidst which the young gentleman and his cane disappeared. After this scene, Lieutenant Elliot did not show himself in Smyrna in public; but a deep and mortal hatred arose in his heart, which nothing but the death of his enemy could satisfy; before this event he merely strove to mortify or pique Vernon, now he kept within his breast the feelings he experienced, and watched patiently for an opportunity to crush his enemy, who in reality, never thought about him or his hatred, unless when forced upon his notice.

Shortly after this fracas, the Penelope was ordered home. Mr. Hobhouse, the first Lieutenant, returned an

invalid in her, Elliot acting as first officer, Sidney Vernon as second, till they should reach England.

We resume our narrative in the Bay of Biscay, the *Penelope* keeping a sharp look out, both to avoid falling in with any of the enemy's line-of-battle ships, as also in hopes of picking up a prize or two. In order to do the latter, the frigate was kept as close to the French coast as possible, but no vessel of any consequence was met with until they were off the Island of Hies, when the *Penelope* gave chase to a remarkably fine brig, evidently a privateer, mounting eight guns, and apparently full of men. She sailed uncommonly fast, running in for the land; and two hours before sun-set, notwithstanding several shots from the frigate's bow-chasers, she escaped uninjured,—and anchored under a heavy battery, in the bay of St. Hillary. The *Penelope* hauled her wind, receiving a smart fire from the battery, which cut away her topsail sheets; hauling off from the land she then lay to, Captain R—— having determined to cut the brig out that night with the boats. This cutting out of ships under a heavy battery, is gallant and daring work, and has been too graphically and faithfully described by the talented and much lamented nautical writer, Captain Marryatt, for us to attempt more than a slight sketch of this particular encounter, which bearing as it does upon our hero's career, must not be lost sight of entirely.

Three boats were employed—one commanded by Lieutenant Elliot, the others by Sidney Vernon, with his friend Henry, and the master, Mr. Simpson. It was a very fine night, though not clear; but the situation of the privateer was so accurately taken, that the boats pulled into the bay, steered by their respective commanders, with the utmost confidence, all eager for the moment to board. The boat commanded by Lieutenant Elliot, was a splendid one—quite new—remarkably fast, and ought to have led, whereas that Sidney Vernon steered, was clumsy, and pulled heavily; nevertheless, it was allowed to lead, and was actually within fifty yards of the privateer, when a succession of blue lights shot up into

the air—immediately followed by a bright blaze from the side of the privateer, who was warped round with her broadside to the advancing boats. A storm of iron hail swept clean over the leading boat, and struck that in which was the master, Mr. Simpson, wounding several of the men, and killing two or three, and so disabling the boat, as to require all their exertions to keep her from sinking.

Vernon knew nothing of this disaster, for his crew with a true British cheer, had urged their boat alongside, and in a moment they were scrambling up the enemy's ship, cutlass and pistol in hand, under a terrible fire of musketry. The young leader was the first to gain the privateer's deck, and shooting a sailor (who first fired his pistol in his face, without effect, and then made a thrust at him with a boarding pike,) through the head—cleared a space before him with his cutlass—calling to his men, to drive the privateer's crew below—and cut the cables. This they actually did; but the ship had been made fast to the shore, by an immense chain, and a succession of lights, both from the battery, and on board, showed our hero that he was totally unsupported. At this moment the privateer's men rallied, and, being more than four times their number, notwithstanding a most desperate resistance, they drove the boats crew over the side.

"Good God! where is Henry Tressidder?" exclaimed Vernon aloud. "He was at my side this moment."

"Pull away, Sid," shouted the voice of the gallant lad, from over the side of the privateer. "The Crapauds have me tight enough, but I am unhurt. God bless you!"

Just then, the privateer opened fire upon them, and wounded three of the men. To attempt to board her again would have been madness, and have uselessly sacrificed all hands. Grieved and vexed to the heart, Vernon bade the men pull out of the bay, and keep a look out for the Penelope's lights, which at that moment they did not see.

Having gained a distance of nearly three miles from the privateer, Vernon ordered the men to lie on their oars. It was most extraordinary that no signal or lights were to be seen from the *Penelope*. It was blowing very strong from the bay; and though the night was dark, yet a large vessel such as the frigate, ought to be seen at a considerable distance.

"She has not surely left us, sir, and set sail," said the quarter-master, "for she is certainly not within hail."

"Fire a pistol," said Vernon. "It's very strange; I was in great hopes that the *Penelope* would stand in, in the morning, and take the privateer in despite of the battery. Poor Tressidder will remain a long time a prisoner, I fear. I can't think how I lost sight of him; he was close behind me when I cut down that fellow that had a grasp of his arm."

Vernon called over the men's names—there were six-and-twenty, and two quarter-masters; three men besides Henry Tressidder and one of the quarter-masters were missing, and seven of those in the boat were wounded, two very severely; Vernon himself had received a sharp gash from a cutlass.

Half an hour passed, and no sign or symptom of the *Penelope* was to be seen.

"This is most unjustifiable proceeding of Captain R—," said Vernon to the quarter-master beside him; "several of the men are badly hurt, and if we are left—and it looks very like it—I scarcely know what to do."

The quarter-master, Mr. Brown, was a thorough seaman, rough, ready, and kind-hearted; smothering a curse, he replied, that "no doubt they were left, from some unknown cause or other. Perhaps, sir, the *Penelope* made out some ship or other, and gave chase."

"I should hardly think that, Mr. Brown, with all her boats out. We had better get out of sight of the privateer before daylight, or she will capture us. I see, luckily, the masts and sails of the boat have not been removed out of her—so far, that's fortunate. Ship the masts, quarter-master, and let us run off till broad daylight. If

the worst comes to the worst, we can board the first craft we see, and get provisions; three days will run us into Falmouth."

"What part of the coast, sir, are we off now?" demanded the quarter-master.

"I think this bay," returned the young man, "must lie between Olone and St. Hillery; and if so, we are not many leagues from the mouth of the Loire. The island we saw outside of us yesterday is Hies. We might easily capture a small merchantman running for the Loire; but we run a great risk from the gun-boats. Moreover, provisions we must have, if we land to look for them, before we can venture to run for the Lizard."

It was the beginning of October, and the nights were long, though the weather was fine, and the air far from cold; still the wounded suffered a good deal, for their comrades were able to do but little to alleviate their pain or thirst, as they did not possess a drop of fresh water in the boat.

Vernon felt extremely uneasy and unhappy; the loss of his friend Tressidder pained him exceedingly; besides the strange way in which they had been deserted distressed his mind. All hands looked anxiously for daylight; and when, at length, the dawn appeared, and the sun rose from behind the high land to the eastward of them, and threw a flood of glorious light over the broad waters before them, no vestige of the Penelope was to be seen; but they beheld, within two leagues of them, a schooner, under full sail, standing in for the land; the breeze was falling fast, and, by the heavy swell running in from the sea, Vernon judged there would be a change of wind as the sun rose higher.

"Lower the sails, men," he exclaimed; "we shall not be perceived for some time by that schooner; and if she does see us, she will take us for a fishing-boat. We must board her, and take her—if a merchantman, that's easy done; but her taunt spars, raking as they do, leads me to suppose she is a small privateer—probably the comrade of the one in the bay."

All now became anxious and eager ; the prospect of a breakfast sharpened not only their appetites but their wits ; and had Sidney Vernon required them to board a frigate, they would have answered with a cheer.

They had hardly lowered the sails before the land wind began to fail.

"Hurrah, boys !" said an Irish sailor, eagerly looking out forward, "by the powers of war, I already smell fried bacon."

"The devil you do, Pat," returned a comrade, laughing. "I never knowed the smell of bacon to work to windward. She's right in the wind's eye of us."

"Oh, bother the wind's eye," said Pat, "the devil a breakfast you'll ever make of that, though a mess of sheep's-eyes, *faix*, wouldn't be bad these hard times. Look you ! be gorra her topgallant-sails are flapping against the mast."

"Now then, lads," cried Vernon, standing up, and looking through his telescope at the schooner, "out oars ! merchantman or privateer, she must be ours."

Those not employed in rowing looked to the priming of their pistols, while the boat was urged through the water with wonderful speed.

"It's an armed schooner," observed Vernon to the quarter-master ; "we shall have a brush for it ; let the wounded men lie down, for we must stand a shot or two before we are alongside. They will make us out very soon."

"Aye, aye, sir. The men will fight like devils when you lead them. I count her ours already," said the quarter-master, knocking the edge of his flints with a key.

The schooner before them was the *Bon Roi Dagobert*, a beautiful craft, mounting four brass guns, a long swivel, and a picked crew of twenty men and three officers. Probably thinking her only a shore-boat, the crew of the schooner paid no attention to their approach, and thus lost the opportunity of sinking them with a shot from their long gun, which Vernon perceiving, made his way

across the water, upon which the vessel lay motionless, in a direct path for her bows, and was actually within a hundred yards before his intentions were suspected. As soon as seen, three huge sweeps were immediately thrust out to bring the schooner's side round to face the boat, and instantly Vernon changed his course. Bang went the swivel with a shower of grape, which, however, the elevation being too great, tore up the water some distance behind them. The next instant the boat was alongside the schooner, and, with a cheer that startled the privateer's men, the British sailors leaped over her low bulwarks, and a desperate hand-to-hand contest took place. Paddy, in scrambling over the side, lost his cutlass, and a huge Frenchman pulled the trigger of his pistol full in his face; it luckily missed fire, and Pat, in a desperate rage, clenched his powerful hand—for he was a large and extraordinarily muscular man—and dealt the Frenchman a tremendous blow in the face, singing out, in a loud voice:

"Take that, you spalpeen; "there's a taste of a weapon that never missed fire."

Down went the Frenchman, as if shot; and Pat, picking up his cutlass, plunged in amid the furious combatants.

The privateer's men fought well; but the death of their commander, killed by Vernon, disheartened the crew, whilst the Penelope's men fought like famished lions, and drove the remnant of the crew below, where they fastened them down, and then, with a wild and triumphant cheer, they struck the schooner's colours.

The privateer was won, but not without loss; so desperate had been the short conflict, that seven Frenchmen lay stark and stiff upon the deck beside their captain, while double that number were seated about the deck, desperately wounded. Of the boat's crew, three were killed and five wounded, but slightly; both Vernon and the quarter-master had escaped without a scratch.

"By Jove, you'll be an admiral," said the old seaman, rubbing the drops of heat from his forehead, and shaking our hero by the hand in great glee, as he cast his glance over the schooner's deck.

The Irish sailor, who was unhurt, walked up to the Frenchman he had knocked down, and who was wiping the blood from his face, as he sat upon one of the brass guns.

"Give us your fist, Johnny --- ; be my soul, you've blackened my face, and I've painted yours a beautiful red."

The Frenchman, seeing Pat hold out his hand, though of course he did not understand a word he said, good humouredly shook it, saying :

"Morbleu! you have a fist like a two-and-thirty pound shot."

"Oh, none of your jaw," said Pat, shaking his head ; "I'll take care of you, my honey."

And so he did—for though they did not understand each other, they became great friends, for the nine days they remained together.

CHAPTER VI.

WHILST cruising in the Mediterranean, Sidney Vernon had employed all his leisure time in studying the French, Italian, and Spanish languages, and spoke the first-named fluently.

On board the *Bon Roi Dagobert* was an intelligent young surgeon, from whom Sidney learnt, to his surprise, that they were chased by a large vessel in the night, and had run round the Island of Hies ; that the ship chasing them had got aground, owing to the darkness, on one of the banks, and thus they escaped. They were running in for the bay to join their consort, the brig, when they were captured.

Vernon was at once convinced that the ship mentioned by the Frenchman must be the *Penelope*, and that

getting aground must have been the cause of her not returning to look for them.

While speaking to the Frenchman, the quarter-master directed Vernon's attention to the brig, which was actually standing out of the bay, with the last of the land wind, and was not more than a league distant ; but there was a wide space of calm between them.

Though extremely anxious to get round the Island of Hies, to ascertain in what situation the Penelope was ; yet the sight of the brig at once recalled his friend Tressidder to his mind, and without further hesitation he resolved to fight her.

The French surgeon had stated that the brig belonged to some merchants at Bordeaux, was one of the fastest crafts on the coast, had eight guns, and eighty men. This was a formidable vessel to attack, with a small schooner with four brass guns, and only fourteen men able to work her, and man the guns.

Nevertheless, they received their commander's orders to prepare to attack the brig with a loud cheer.

The tricolour was run up again ; the men below, who had surrendered, were secured in the fore part of the schooner, and the crew having made a hearty though hasty repast from the schooner's stores, which were abundant and good, and a small quantity of brandy served out, all hands prepared for action.

Sidney Vernon, though resolved to attack the brig, was yet puzzled, should he force her to strike, how to take possession of her, for with only fourteen or fifteen able hands, it would be folly to attempt boarding a vessel with a crew of eighty men.

The swivel of the schooner was a formidable gun, and capable of dismasting the brig, if well manœuvred. There were seven of the Penelope's best gunners on board, and these men he placed at the gun amidship, with instructions to aim entirely at the brig's topmasts.

Being a faster vessel than the schooner, after the first surprise was over, she would, seeing her superiority in men, undoubtedly run them on board. In the meantime,

the schooner lay perfectly becalmed, and Vernon looked anxiously seaward; beyond the Island of Hies, there appeared a dark line on the water, like a breeze coming in from the sea; and yet the brig came out from the bay with a tolerable breeze from the land.

"The wind from the bay will prevail, sir," said the old quarter-master; "she comes out fast—the sea breeze will not tell—there's cats-paws over the water now."

As Mr. Brown spoke, the topsails of the schooner lifted and filled, and, after a little coquetting the breeze increased sufficiently to urge the schooner through the water, at the rate of three knots.

"Now, my men, steady—watch the rise of the sea," said Vernon, "let every shot tell, and bring down something."

"Aye, aye, sir; she's a beauty," slapping the gun on the breech. "She's sure to do something more than make a noise."

"Stand by then," said Vernon, "I will give you the word, when I think you are within proper range."

The two vessels were now fast approaching each other; the brig with her yards squared, the schooner close hauled, with her foresail brailed.

A dead silence reigned on board the schooner. Just as the two vessels came within musket shot, Sidney Vernon cried—

"Now, lads, mind the heave, and fire."

Scarcely two minutes elapsed ere a gush of snow-white smoke burst from the gun amidships, and its thundering report pealed over the deep, at the same moment the tricolor was hauled down, and the flag of old England was run up in its place.

A loud cheer burst from the little crew of the schooner, as they beheld the top-gallantmast, and its rigging hanging over the side of the brig.

"A little too high, my lads! load away, we will give him another dose on the starboard tack."

The crew of the Brig seemed utterly confounded, for she shot up in the wind and was taken aback.

"All ready, sir," said the man at the gun, as the schooner went in stays, and skilfully handed by the quarter-master, who was a thorough seaman, she crossed the brig's bow, firing her long gun as she passed.

"Hurrah, my boys," shouted the Irishman, waving his hat, "there goes her fore-topsail yard; by the powers we are paying Mounseer for our breakfast."

The brig seeing how affairs stood, returned the fire of the schooner's gun, by blazing away with her guns stuffed to the muzzle, with all kinds of shot, which cut up the rigging of the schooner in several places, and slightly wounded two of the men.

Another shot from the long gun, aimed by Vernon himself, brought down the brig's main topmast, with the whole of its hamper of sails and rigging, thus leaving her for a time unmanageable, and crossing under her stern, for the wind had increased to a fine working breeze, he fired his two brass guns loaded with grape and canister amongst the enraged crew of the privateer. Still the Bon Homme Richard, had no notion of striking her colours, but with her mainsail and gib and fore course she kept underweigh, and when she was able, returned the fire of the schooner, doing, however, very little damage.

At length the long gun of the schooner, brought down her gaff, and so cut the sails to pieces, that the brig became unmanageable; and her men were so mauled by the shot and grape from the schooner's guns, that down went her colours. Thus the second privateer was won! But how to take possession of her puzzled our young commander exceedingly, for the crew of the brig must have perceived the paucity of their numbers.

While consulting with the quarter-master upon the subject, one of the sailors, aloft, splicing a topsail sheet, sung out, "the Penelope! turning the east point of the Island of Hies."

Sidney Vernon ran forward, and fixed his glass upon the ship; it was quite true, the Penelope was turning the eastern head of the island, and was standing towards them, with all the canvass she could set on a wind.

"This is fortunate, Mr. Brown," said Vernon, "get out the boat, I will board the brig; look after our missing hands, we shall have plenty of men presently to take charge of her."

The schooner's boat was got overboard, and in a few minutes our hero was pulling towards the brig, with half-a-dozen hands.

Before he reached the side, he recognised his friend Tressidder, looking over the bulwarks and waving his hat. This rejoiced him exceedingly. The next moment he was alongside.

"By Jove, Sid," exclaimed Henry Tressidder, as Vernon sprang upon the privateer's deck, and shook him heartily by the hand. "You have been knocking us about in a very pretty manner this last hour-and-half. That long gun of yours is a monstrous ugly customer. This is Monsieur Lamartin, captain of the *Bon Homme Richard*," introducing to Sidney Vernon a smart active looking little Frenchman, who, notwithstanding his misfortune, was bowing and smiling quite as pleasantly as he could have done had he gained the battle.

"The presence of your ship, Monsieur," said Captain Lamartin, pointing to the fast advancing frigate, "forced me to strike; at the same time allow me to compliment you, monsieur; for one so young, you handled the little schooner *a merveille*."

Surprised at the good humour of the French captain, Sidney Vernon, answered him in his own language, assuring him that he also fought his ship well, and that he, himself, owed his victory to the long gun of the schooner. He then inquired how many men he had wounded, and if he had a surgeon on board.

"I am sorry to say, monsieur, there are five killed and more than twenty wounded—some severely; but there is a good Surgeon and his assistant attending to them. The same ship, monsieur, that chased us yesterday, is it not?" pointing to the *Penelope*.

"The same monsieur."

The Frenchman then requested to know how he had gained possession of the schooner.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders, "that was a want of precaution of poor Captain Maraw, a brave man, but *trop confiant*,"

A gun from the Penelope called their attention to the frigate, which was now within a league of them; and Sidney Vernon telling the captain of the Bon Homme Richard, that he would send help to set the brig to-rights, entered his boat, with the overjoyed Henry, and ordered his men to pull for the frigate.

As Sidney Vernon approached the Penelope she backed her main topsails, and allowed him to run alongside; the deck was crowded with men; and contrary to all discipline, the crew cheered the young lieutenant as he ascended the side of the frigate.

Captain R——, with lieutenant Elliot, were standing on the quarter-deck, as our hero approached; there was a frown on Captain R——'s dark features, and a bitter, malicious scowl on Elliot's face, as his glance met the open, cheerful, expressive look of Sidney Vernon's fine eyes.

"So, sir," said Captain R——, "you think, no doubt, you have performed a wonderful feat in capturing two paltry privateers; I hope none of the men are severely wounded."

Vernon looked into the face of Captain R——with an expression of the greatest surprise, but immediately replied with a smile—

"Why, sir, three of the boats were dispatched last night, to cut out the brig by your own orders, and the schooner was chased by the frigate. I really—"

"Sir, that's not answering my question. I asked you if any of the men were wounded?"

"I am sorry to say, sir, there are, and two or three killed," said Vernon, in a tone of disgust; neither did he seek to hide the expression of contempt, that curled his lip, and brought the red blood to his cheek.

"Well sir, return to your duty," said Captain R——, "this affair will become a matter of enquiry when we reach England. Mr. Elliot," turning to the first lieu-

tenant, "will you see to securing the rascals in those privateers; put a crew and a sailing master on board them, and make sail for Falmouth."

"Well, by Jove!" said Henry Tressidder, in a tone of high indignation, "if this is not most outrageous; by—"

"Take care, young gentleman," said Lieutenant Elliot, as he passed, catching the words of the midshipman, who stood beside his friend, and heard the extraordinary conversation between him and Captain R—, "take care what you say, or your pretty face wont save you from—"

"From what sir," said Henry, losing for once his usual forbearance under insult.

"Quarter-master Jones," said Lieutenant Elliot in a loud voice.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied that individual, coming up and touching his hat.

"This young gentleman is under arrest for insolence."

"You are a cowardly scoundrel, Elliot," said Vernon, his whole face flushed and boiling with indignation at the treatment he had received, "a day of reckoning will come, and be assured, when it does, you will have cause to remember this."

"Mr. Jones," said Lieutenant Elliot, with a face pale as death, turning to the quarter-master, "you heard those words—remember them."

"I'm hard of hearing sir; Lord bless you it takes a speaking-trumpet at times to make me hear. What were you saying, sir?"

Elliot cast a look of intense rage at the placid features of the quarter-master, and then turned away without another word.

Four hours after, the Penelope was shaping her course for England, followed by the two prizes. In the brig was Henry Tressidder and quarter-master Brown. The schooner was in charge of quarter-master Jones. Sidney pursued his duty without heeding the insinuations and covert insolence of Lieutenant Elliot, or the total silence

of Captain R——, who, except when excited by brandy, which he drank at night to excess, never addressed him, having previously expressed his determination of bringing him before a court martial, for insolence to his superiors, and disobedience of orders.

Sidney Vernon said nothing, but was equally determined, on his return to England, to demand a Court-martial, and then quit the service. He resolved to go abroad, either to Spain or Portugal, for a time.

The first twenty-four hours after leaving the French coast, the frigate and her prizes made little progress; the wind became adverse and very light. The following day, a gale set in for the nor-east, followed by an intensely dark night, and a tremendous sea.

When day broke, Vernon who was on deck, looked anxiously out for the brig and the schooner. The latter he perceived with his glass, under close reefed top-sail and storm-jib; but the brig was no where to be seen.

Rather uneasy, he continued to scan the horizon for some time; but no sign of the brig. When this was reported to Captain R——, he merely said—

“Let the brig find her own way; this comes of youngsters capturing crafts not worth powder and shot, let alone men’s lives.”

These words were canvassed over and over again in the men’s quarters, and many a strange pithy observation was made by Jack upon the captain’s conduct. Vernon was a prodigious favourite; his gallantry, courage, and kindness of heart endeared him to the men. The present captain flogged on the lightest pretence—their former commander, Captain Blackwood, never flogged, and yet far better discipline was observed and kept on board the *Penelope*. The men, however, knew this state of things would not last long, for they were approaching England, and captain R—— would be only for a short time their commander.

Lieutenant Hobhouse, whose wounds gave him excessive pain, and confined him to his bed, was visited by Vernon whenever he could get away from his duties, and

whose endeavours to alleviate his weariness was repaid by friendly counsel.

"Bear patiently the extraordinary conduct of the captain," he urged, "It is not the first time he has been guilty of acts alike discreditable to his head and heart. As to his threat of bringing you to a Court Martial—it's all nonsense. Your gallant acts in capturing the Privateers will not only be highly estimated but must ensure you promotion. And as to your threat of leaving the service, you must forget that it contains two such brutes as Elliot and Captain R——,"

During the day, the *Penelope* lay-to, and the little schooner, notwithstanding the severity of the gale, actually worked up under her quarter.

The brig had not been seen the preceding night, though the schooner had lights at the mast-head, and they had been close to each other at nightfall. The schooner's crew had kept a sharp look out; but never once, during the night, made out the brig's lights, though the *Penelope's* were frequently visible.

Then she has been re-captured by her crew," said Vernon, in an exceedingly vexed tone, to the master. "I said there was risk in leaving her crew in her, with so few hands to guard them, and work the brig; but Captain R—— would not hear of their coming on board the frigate—this is very distressing."

"Perhaps she bore up, sir," said the master, "you know she was in a rather crippled state, and her jury topmasts were rather slight. She may have carried away her spars, for it blew tremendously the first watch."

"Perhaps so; but I fear the Frenchmen have contrived, during the fury of the gale, to re-capture hers."

The following day, the wind shifted to the southward, and then southward and westward, hourly increasing in force. The *Penelope* and the schooner ran for the Lizard, and anchored within a few hours of each other in Falmouth-road.

Many pleasurable and painful feelings agitated our hero's breast as he entered Carrick-roads—Tressidder

House, the numerous spots around it, where he had spent so many happy hours, all came pleurably to his memory ; but the recollection of Henry Tressidder's uncertain fate, and the painful duty of communicating the sad intelligence to his family, cast a gloom over him, which he could not easily shake off. After a time, however, his mind turned to other matters—his determination to demand inquiry into his conduct as soon as the ship arrived at Plymouth, and his resolve to quit a service which had become distasteful to him by the brutal and insolent conduct of Elliot, and the unworthy treatment of the captain : against the latter he intended bringing a charge which he could not refute.

The pain of seeing the Tressidders was spared him, by an order from the captain that he should not quit the ship ; and he took the earliest opportunity of writing to them, giving as fair a colouring to the unfortunate events as possible.

Vernon was not aware that Elliot's family on the mother's side was from Cornwall, and that he had some relations, respectable farmers in the neighbourhood of St. Just.

Captain R——had gone on shore, and some gentlemen of Elliot's acquaintance came on board to dine. During the repast, Elliot became excited by wine, and a chance remark of one of the visitors, respecting the bankruptcy of a merchant in the neighbourhood, caused Vernon to leave the table.

Elliot burst into a horse laugh, saying—

“ Those are the kind of swindlers that get on best in this world. That's hitting the right nail on the head ; that saucy, proud-looking fellow's father ruined many people by that swindling trick of becoming bankrupt.”

Sidney's blood boiled ; his first impulse was to return and break every bone in Elliot's body, but, a fierce resolve of vengeance, at a future period, restrained him.

Shortly after, Elliot and his friends left the ship, and pulled towards the promontory, leading round to St. Just.

Our hero awaited the return of the boat, and ascertained

that it was ordered to go back for Elliot, in a couple of hours. Entering his cabin, he loaded two duelling pistols, placed them under his coat, and about half an hour before the time appointed for the lieutenant's return, went on deck, called a shore boat, and jumping into it, requested to be put ashore at the point where Elliot had landed.

Vernon walked, in a deep reverie, through the fields leading towards St. Just, a part of the shore, bordering the harbour of Falmouth, extremely solitary, being chiefly covered with furs, some shrubs, and scanty pasturage; but the view from it was extremely pleasing. On the opposite side of the wide estuary, stood Tressidder House; Restronget Creek, with the romantic hamlet, and Church of Milor, hanging on the very verge of its thickly wooded inlet.

The well remembered spots, where he and the happy and amiable family of Tressidder had passed so many joyous hours, forcibly thrilled through his mind and heart; he sat down on the bank, and leaned his head on his hands. The setting sun—the calm that reigned around, his own thoughts, that had fled to the past, had a soothing effect, and passion and fierce resolutions were fast leaving his breast, when the sound of footsteps roused him from his dream.

"How is this?" exclaimed the hated voice of Elliot, considerably excited by indulgence in the juice of the grape.

The die was cast. Sidney jumped up, and with a voice, arresting Elliot's steps, he said—

"I have borne for years, with your brutality and insolence."

"Come, come, youngster," interrupted Elliot, turning very pale. "None of your d—d jaw with me here—curse me if I don't break you for this, and the language you used before."

"Silence, coward!" exclaimed Vernon fiercely, with the flat of his hand, striking Elliot across the face. "Will that give you courage?" drawing the two pistols

from beneath his coat, and offering one to his opponent. "I tell you plainly, but one of us shall leave this spot alive—stand back—four paces—and—"

Before Vernon could finish the sentence, Elliot seized the offered pistol, and instantly fired it full in his face, saying with a withering curse—

"There, take that," and was hastily retreating, when our hero, feeling his sight failing, and his limbs giving way under him—levelled his pistol, and fired at his cowardly foe. A wild shriek escaped Elliot's lips,—he sprung from the ground—tossed his arms wildly in the air, then fell prostrate.

Vernon stood for a second, the blood streaming from his head over his face; the earth seemed to fly round, he made an effort to place his hand to his head—the next instant, he lay stretched without sense, or motion upon the sod.

CHAPTER VII.

IN our last chapter we left our hero and his mortal enemy stretched on the earth, the one senseless, and the other apparently dead. Some hours elapsed ere Vernon regained his consciousness, and when he did so, found himself lying on a mattress, with his head carefully bandaged. He rubbed his eyes, and for some minutes could scarcely convince himself that he was not dreaming. Again closing them and remaining quiet for a few minutes, he became more composed, and a confused idea of all that had occurred passed through his brain. Raising himself up on his elbow he looked around; at first he fancied that he was in the hold of a ship—for around him was piled, kegs, barrels, tar-paulins, sails, oars, boat-hooks, and an extraordinary mixture of

articles appertaining to a sea-faring life. Upon a closer inspection, however, he discovered, by the aid of a lighted candle stuck in the neck of a bottle, and placed on a barrel, that he was in a hole under ground.

It was evidently an artificial cave, some twenty feet square, and eight or nine feet high ; old beams of ships crossed the top, and planks were shored up against the sides. How, and by what means he became the occupant of the cave he could not imagine, and although he was rapidly recovering his strength, he was at present unable to rise. Being exceedingly thirsty, he stretched out his hand and took up a pitcher that stood close beside his mattress ; it appeared full of water, he put it to his lips, but found it was nearly half brandy ; at this juncture, a noise, on one side of the cave, attracted his attention. A barrel was pushed from its place, and a man's head made its appearance. The light fell full upon the face—and a most singular face it was, and yet he thought it was familiar to him.

A pair of dark twinkling eyes were fixed upon him, as their owner squeezed his stout body through the hole, and stood upright ; so enveloped was this object in a rough pea-jacket, tarpaulin trowsers, and other coverings, and the head protected by a huge sow-wester, that Sidney Vernon scarcely knew what to make of the figure ; but throwing aside the sow-wester, which was dripping wet, the man said, in a rough, cheerful voice—

“So, my hearty—God bless you ! you are all alive and ataunt, and splicing the main brace too ! All's right,” he continued, giving a hitch to his trowsers ; “I thought as how a scratch in the head like that would not stop the log of Master Vernon.”

“What !” exclaimed our hero, in great astonishment—
“Jem—old Jem Marline !”

“Aye, aye, sir ; here I be sure enough,” said the old man, rolling a huge piece of tobacco into a more convenient part of his capacious jaw ; “and, thank God, I've lived to be a sarvice to you ; for many's the good turn you did old Jem—here's your health—heaven bless your

handsome face!" and lifting the pitcher he took a draught quite sufficient to unsettle a man's equilibrium, and, on putting it down, said—"It's better than doctor's stuff, your honour—I made it rather weak though—but that's easily mended—take a pull sir."

"No, no, Jem," interrupted Vernon—"brandy wont do—I feel feverish—let me have a draught of pure water."

Jem shook his head, saying—

"You shall have it, master Vernon; but pure water never suited me—I always takes it nearly half and half—that is, three parts brandy and one water—I never knew it fail me—in fever or ague, fortune or misfortune—it cheered my heart—I'll just drink a safe passage to that bad-hearted man, who caused my son's death—and who nearly stopped your log, and brought you to a dead reckoning."

"Elliot is dead then," said Vernon, in a tone sad enough, and with a painful feeling at his heart—alas! wishing, like many another, that the deed could be undone.

"Dead as a pickled pilchard," returned old Jem, seating himself on the top of a barrel, and looking anything but sorrowful.

"How long have I been here, Jem?" asked Vernon, after a short silence, passed by the old man in taking another pull at the grog, and getting some water in a can for his guest; "and where am I?"

"As to the matter of time, sir, you have been here two watches. My boy and I carried you in here. You see this is a bit of a place," continued Jem, rubbing his head, and, perhaps, a little perplexed; "but it's a snug spot, your honour—for stowing away those little 'modities the king, God bless him—it's not him neither—puts the tax on; things taste all the sweeter for not paying the duty. But here comes my boy, Ned."

As old Jem, who thus confessed to be a smuggler, spoke, a well-built, sailor-like youth, of some two or three-and-twenty years of age, entered the cave, and was immediately recognized by Vernon. Having placed the basket

on a barrel, his father proceeded to wash and dress Sidney Vernon's wound. Though neither dangerous or indeed very painful, it was, as Jem expressed it, a rather ugly gap on the side of the head, the ball having struck in a slanting direction.

While the operation of washing and dressing is going on, we will briefly explain how old Jem Marline and his son became acquaintances of our hero.

About two years after Vernon joined the Reindeer, Jem Marline and his two sons were pressed into the service from a merchant vessel, leaving Port Royal. The old man, having served in a king's ship, did not care much about it; but the lads were greatly grieved. A mutual feeling of kindness and good will sprung up between old Jem and our hero, and many things were imparted to the youth by the old sailor which, after a time, he found useful in his nautical career. Sidney was frequently the means, too, of shielding the youths from punishment.

On returning to England, they lay one night in Yarmouth Roads, then full of merchant craft. One of Jem's sons dropped overboard, thinking, no doubt, to swim to one of the merchant vessels. Sidney Vernon, happened to be standing in the shade of the mast, and saw him do so; but it unfortunately occurred, that Elliot also witnessed the attempt to escape, and, at once, sung out—

“A man overboard—escaping.”

And seizing a musket from a sentry, fired at a dark object he thought was the man's head. He was reprimanded for the act—and boats were sent in pursuit. Many of the vessels were searched—but in vain. The next day the poor fellow's body was picked up on a bank, at half ebb—the ball had struck his head; no doubt he sunk at once.

Jem took his son's death sadly to heart; his brother vowed some day to take a deadly revenge on Elliot. This was reported, and the youth was flogged. Jem then took to drinking, and got often into disgrace.

Months after, Ned Marline contrived to escape, and

was not retaken. Old Jem rejoiced exceedingly—determining to follow his son's example when an opportunity occurred. A few days after this event, the frigate anchored off Portsmouth, and, somehow or other, notwithstanding the strict watch kept upon him, Jem Marline one morning was missing.

Sidney Vernon was sent with an armed crew to hunt him out. This service was most disagreeable; for, if the old man was caught, he was sure to get the cat, and perhaps ordered to be whipped through the vessels at Spithead.

Vernon purposely dispersed the men through the few public-houses, and went himself to a house he knew was kept by a relation of Jem's, a very respectable inn. In the cellar he found Jem stowed away behind a cask; and having drilled a small hole with the point of his knife, and inserted a straw into it, was slowly and quietly imbibing its contents.

"Well, master Vernon," said Jem, coolly, pulling out the straw, and putting in its place a small peg, "you have scented me out."

"Yes," growled the landlord, "you old, ungrateful sea-horse—I gave you shelter, for your daughter's sake, and there you have started a cask of my best claret."

"Avast, then, Thomas, avast! haul in the slack—I have all chalked down—though I can't say I like the liquor—it wants strength and it's rather sour—and as black as coal."

"As good claret, you old bear," said the landlord, laughing, "as ever was drunk."

"Precious poor stuff for a fellow's inside, for all that, Thomas."

"What shall I do with you, Jem," said Vernon, amused at the old man's coolness, and resolved at the same time not to take him. "It's a bad job!",

"A cursed bad job, master Vernon. If as how I had been left a week, I'd have cleared the cask of this new stuff, and stowed myself inside, till the weather cleared—but now I stands high and dry. 'Spose I must taste the cat instead."

"May be, sir," said the landlord, in a half-hesitating tone, "you would say nothing about him; he is too old to bear the punishment of desertion."

"Can I trust you, Mr. Turner," said Vernon.

"You can, sir, safely—old sinner as he is, he is my father-in-law."

"Then stow yourself away, Jem, you shall never feel the cat through my interference."

Old Jem's eyes twinkled, he rubbed his horny hand across his face saying—

"God bless you, sir, old Jem's yarn is nearly spun out—but he may yet live to do a good turn to your honour."

He held out his huge paw—Vernon shook it heartily, and retired, while Jem very calmly pulled out the spigot and inserted the straw, and returned to his task with renewed vigour.

Such was the origin of Sidney Vernon's intimacy with Jem Marline. Feeling fatigued and somewhat feverish and certainly very miserable in mind, our hero, after partaking of some tea Ned brought him from his cabin, which was over the cave, lay back upon the mattress and endeavoured to sleep. For some time he found it utterly impossible to compose his mind, he was very feverish, and when, after a time, he began to doze, he talked rather incoherently. Ned, who lay in the cave, upon some old sails, so as to be at hand to render him any assistance he might require, began to be alarmed; but about day-break Vernon fell into a refreshing sleep which lasted several hours,

When he awoke, he perceived Ned, fast asleep, and the oil lamp, suspended by a rusty chain from a beam, threw a feeble glare over the strange domicile he had found repose in, and many and bitter were his thoughts as to what might be the consequences that would follow the late rash act—for rash and inconsiderate it certainly was. Should he give himself up, and stand his trial for the shooting of Lieutenant Elliot? The true state of the case would be difficult, if not impossible to prove. Whatever Jem Marlin knew of the affair, he would be of no

use as a witness, besides he dare not openly appear, for, if taken, himself and his son would have to stand their trial as deserters; therefore he could not bring them forward. If he cleared himself from the supposition of killing Elliot unfairly, he would have to stand before a court martial for disobedience of orders, and quitting his ship when under arrest. Altogether he felt miserable, and undecided how to act.

As the day advanced, Ned awoke, and Jem made his appearance with a basket of provisions, on which our hero made a tolerably hearty breakfast.

Vernon requested Jem to tell him how, in the first place, he came to be living in that part of the world; and how he happened to witness the affair between himself and Lieutenant Elliot.

"Why, you see, sir, we comes originally—that is, we hails from this here part of the globe, and so after Ned's escape out of the frigate, he comes down here, and not to be idle, your honour, and at the same time keep out of the way, he joins those gentry as finds the night the pleasantest time to carry on trade."

"Ah," interrupted Vernon, "so Ned, you turned smuggler. They were always famous in these parts for running a cargo, even under the very nose of the revenue."

Old Jem indulged in a laugh that threatened to capsize the barrell he was seated upon.

"Aye, aye, just so, Master Vernon—the old saying, you know—well, when I found I was free of the old ship, I came down into these parts to look after my old woman, who hails from Mousehole, a famous fishing village near Penzance. I knew I should hear of Ned, and sure enough I found them both living in the cabin over our heads, and so as I loves a drop or two of grog, free of duty, I joins the mess, and we carry on a roaring trade, and in this here cave we stows away our cargoes."

"It's a bad trade, Jem, said Vernon, "and I fear, some of these days, it will bring you and Ned into disgrace and trouble; but how came you to find me, and how is it you venture abroad. You must have recog-

nized the Reindeer and the Penelope, for strange enough they are both lying in Carrick Roads."

"Where, Master Vernon, for both ships weighed with the flood," said Jem.

"What! so soon; was no enquiry or search made for me?"

"A party of marines came ashore yesterday evening, and went as far as St. Just's, and hunted the village, as well as St. Maws. But, it may be a relief to you, sir, to know, though neither Ned nor I rejoice at it, Elliot's not dead; but it's a satisfaction, you have spoiled his jaw tackle for life."

"Not dead!" exclaimed Vernon, with an exclamation of delight, "Jem, jem, you have taken a load off my heart—where did you hear that?"

Jem rolled a large piece of tobacco into a ball, and having stowed it to his satisfaction in his capacious mouth, said—

"The officer of marines told the parson of St. Just's that a duel had taken place between two officers of the Penelope—that Lieutenant Elliot was shot, and that a piece of his jaw tackle was carried away, and that, though he would recover, he was done up for the service for ever. 'The Lord be praised for that,' thought I, when my old woman brought back the news. Finding no trace of you, this morning, the ships sailed in company; but still, Master Vernon, it will be better for you to cross the water till this here squall blows off, for, in course, you must give up the service."

"I intended doing so, before this event," said Vernon making an attempt to rise.

"You must keep quiet for a day or so," said Jem. "Your top hamper is a little damaged, but a few days' quiet, will set up your rigging as taut as ever; besides, they keeps a look out for you still, and I must keep close myself, for the men of the coast-guard are prowling along shore. But I didn't tell your honour how I came to be so handy to you when you fell. Last evening, Ned and I were under the bank watching the two

ships, and send Lieutenant Elliot, come ashore; we could see all that occurred about the bank, and over the harbour, without the chance of our being seen ourselves—and says Ned, ‘I’ll tell you what, father—I’ll give that devil, Elliot, something he’ll remember, as he comes back,’ and I thought of my poor boy—but just as I was a thinking of this, you comes ashore, and sits down within a few yards of our hiding place. So we heard all as passed between you and that bad man, and saw his cowardly attempt to murder you. We had just got to our legs to seize him, when you fired, and immediately after fell to the earth. So it struck us, the best thing we could do, was to bring you here, for I saw at once you were not mortally wounded.”

“Well Jem, my mind is made up. I will not subject myself to the miseries of a naval court-martial. I will send in my resignation, and a clear narrative of all I have suffered from the unwarrantable conduct of Captain R——, and the insufferable insolence of Elliot. I have several letters to write, so you must contrive to get me paper and pens, and I think in a couple of days I shall be able to leave this. Fortunately I happen to have funds enough about me for present purposes, and in a few days I can command more.”

The two following days were spent in writing to Sir Christopher Vernon, giving every particular, not merely of the affair with Elliot, but of the causes which led to it; of the disgust which the gross conduct of Captain R—— and the brutality of the Lieutenant had given him for the service, and his determination never again to enter it. He requested that two hundred pounds might be forthwith remitted for his use, and made payable at some house in Lisbon, whither it was his intention to proceed.

To Mr. Tressidder, a long and detailed account of his own, and of his friend Henry’s misfortunes were written, and an earnest entreaty for advice how to act in his present dilemma. Mr. Tressidder had unfortunately left London, and his answer was consequently delayed,

and did not reach his young friend till after many months. He strongly urged Vernon to come boldly forward and demand enquiry. The newspapers, he said, had already done him ample justice; his whole career had been laid before the public, and his gallant conduct both on board the *Penelope*, and his capture of the two privateers, highly eulogised. He lamented in sorrowful terms his dear boy's fate, which, after every enquiry remained a mystery.

A week elapsed ere Vernon received any answer to his letter to his uncle; and then the reply was a laconic note, from Mr. Boodle, the solicitor, stating that in less than a month he should forward a statement of the trust-accounts, and whatever balance might be due, should be forwarded to Messrs. Muratto, and Co., of Lisbon, upon whom he enclosed an order for five hundred pounds. So far that was extremely satisfactory, for some how youth consoles itself wonderfully in misfortune, when the purse has a healthy appearance—not indeed that Sidney Vernon, ever cared for, or sought to acquire gold; when he had it, he was generous to a fault; and when without it, and that frequently happened, he never bestowed a thought upon it, till some call upon his good nature was made by a brother mid.

"Humph," said Sidney, on reading the cold, formal letter, "it is quite evident my worthy uncle, the Earl that is to be, cares very little about either the honour or the welfare of his hopeful nephew."

Thrusting the draft for £500 into his pocket-book, he tore Mr. Boodle's letter to pieces,

That evening, Jem returned with the intelligence that a fine brig was in the harbour, bound from London to Leghorn, to touch at Lisbon on her way. That she came in in the late gale from loss of her main-boom, and would sail the next day. Her captain was a Scotchman.

At Vernon's request, old Marline arranged with the captain that he should be taken on board off the *Lizard Lights*, and entered as a Mr. Montague of Penzance.

"I have made all right," said old Jem, "you are

expected in one of the Mount Bay luggers. It wouldn't do for you to go on board the brig in the harbour, as the custom-house officer will overhaul her before she sails. But no suspicion will be created now, as the captain entered Mr. Montague, to be taken on board at the Lizard Lights."

It was a clear, moonlight night, as the Cornish lugger, the *One and All*, stood out to sea, with a land breeze filling her sails. Sidney Vernon was leaning over her low gunwale, as she ran out between the high land of Pendennis and the Black Rock, that lies almost in the very middle of the channel between St. Maws and Pendennis Castle. He cast a long lingering look upon the scene he was quitting, perhaps for ever, and his thoughts flitted rapidly over his past career—his school-boy days—his uncle's antipathy—the Tressidder's—his friend Harry—Elliot's brutal conduct—the last encounter. The retrospect brought few pleasureable but very bitter remembrances, and his generous heart was chilled.

At length he was aroused by the old sailor calling his attention to Pendennis Castle, and its ramparts.

Doubling the long and dangerous reef of the Manacle rocks, the lugger hauled her wind, and running along shore, a sight of the Lizard Lights was soon obtained. Steering into a well-known cove, the sails were lowered, and the anchor let go. Wrapping himself in his mantle our hero sought, in slumber, to dissipate his sombre thoughts and reflections.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two hours after sunrise Sidney Vernon awoke from a somewhat uneasy slumber. Jem and Ned, and the boy they had with them—for the lugger was easily handled,

not being more than sixteen or eighteen tons burthen—were very busy preparing breakfast. It was a clear, fine morning, with the wind at nor-east; the sea was quite calm, excepting a slight ripple, caused by the light breeze which blew off the high land above them. Not even a swell broke on the wild point of the Lizard. Several small coasting vessels were doubling the reef of the Stag rocks, and far to seaward, a few large crafts were working in with the land.

“It’s a beautiful morning, Jem,” said our hero, as he partook of the hot coffee the kind-hearted old seaman had prepared; “how calm and lovely old ocean looks—and these bluff old rocks and precipices—many a time Henry Tressidder and I have climbed them; poor fellow! he may now be lingering away his young life in a French prison, for I cannot think anything happened to the brig during that gale—she was such a very fine sea-boat.”

“More’s the pity he should be in the hands of the Mounseers,” said Jem, to whom Vernon had related his attack upon the privateers. “Poor young man, he was a soft-hearted, high-spirited lad—God bless him.”

“I wish,” said Vernon, seriously, “I could persuade you and Ned to abandon this illicit trade you have taken to; I fear in the end, Jem, it will lead to sorrow. You are a fine able young fellow, Ned, why waste your youth in such unlawful pursuits?”

“I’ll give it up, sir—I will indeed,” said Ned; “with what your kind heart has rewarded us, and the money we have saved, we can fit out this lugger as a fishing-smack, and go and settle at Mousehole, where my old mother has relatives, and we shall be safer there in the long run than elsewhere.”

“I am rejoiced to hear you promise this. Your father is too old to be caught at this bad work; and, depend upon it, an honest trade, with small profit, is far sweeter than an unlawful one and riches.”

Old Jem masticated his favourite weed for a long time before he could get out a word; at last he said—

“’Praps you are right, Master Vernon—you always

was, and always gave me good advice. I'll do as you wish—God bless you—we may never meet again ;” and the old man rubbed his great rough, horny hand across his eyes ; “and I always loved you, Master Vernon, like my own boys, asking your pardon for doing so ; but howsomdever, you shall be obeyed.”

“Here’s the brig, father,” said Ned Marline, who was on the look out, “coming out from the Manacles with studding sails set. Let us up anchor, and hoist the signal.”

In a few minutes the lugger was under-weight, and standing out till she lay right in the brig’s course, hauled her fore sheet to windward, and hoisted the signal agreed upon. It was very soon perceived by the brig’s crew, and the wind being light, and the sea quite smooth, she bore up without lowering her studding sails, and the lugger letting draw her foresheet, shot up alongside.

Captain James Donald was standing near the gangway, with his glass in hand, and was much struck with the fine figure and handsome countenance of his passenger, as he sprung up the side ; after shaking old Marline’s and Ned’s hands cordially and affectionately. The old man was much affected, and parted from him as he would from a son—saying to Captain Donald, who was himself a very kind-hearted man, though somewhat rough, as he drank the glass of grog ordered him :

“There’s no better sailor ever trod the deck of your brig, captain, or any other craft as ever sailed the ocean, since Captain Noah started his craft—God bless and prosper him.”

Captain Donald looked surprised, for Vernon was habited in plain clothes, Jem having ordered a small outfit for him in Falmouth—saying :

“You did not tell me, old fellow, that Mr. Montague was a sailor.”

“Mr. Montague be d——,” said the old man, rather excited ; “there’s no use now in sailing under false colours. That’s the officer as made the ould William Tell, an eighty gun ship, strike to a frigate of six and

thirty, the saucy Penelope, and took two privateers with a long boat, and fourteen true blues. And now farewell, Master Vernon—that's the name he hails by, old chap, and a safe passage to you."

And slacking the rope that held the lugger, she dropped astern, and the brig bracing round, stood away before the wind.

"Well, Mr. Vernon, as such is your name, and it makes no odds to me," said Captain Donald, "I'm heartily glad to hear that you are a sailor—we shall pull altogether—for we have the cabin to ourselves. I heard your name mentioned while in Falmouth, in connexion with that duel with Lieutenant Elliot, and, I can assure you, you had the best of it from every one; for the young midshipmen on board both the Reindeer and the Penelope were ashore, and dined together at the — hotel. It appears that this antagonist of yours is pretty generally hated on board both crafts, while you were a favourite; and many of the old seamen who served with you were still on board the Reindeer—so it soon went abroad how you fought the Penelope single handed for two hours against the William Tell, and took the two privateers on your way home. A good officer, and a kind one, Mr. Vernon, never loses by his kindness; and I can tell you, for I was by at the time, some of Lieutenant Elliot's backers on board the Penelope, and they were few, devilish nearly got mauled—and the men were sent on board, with a party of marines, in consequence."

"They were as brave a set of blue jackets," said Vernon, with a heightened colour, and feeling highly pleased, "on board the Penelope as ever manned a ship. Yours is a handsome brig, Captain Donald, and sails fast."

"As good a sea boat, sir, as ever a man trusted his life to," said the captain, looking aloft with a pleased eye. "I'm rather light, and rather short-handed; but I expect to pick up both goods and a few hands in Lisbon."

That evening Captain Donald and his passenger got extremely intimate over a glass of grog; the captain invariably took three tumblers of Scotch whisky toddy,

and never more or less ; he was fond of talking—kept a good table—spun a good yarn, with this peculiarity, that if the story was not long enough to last out the three tumblers, the last was finished at a draught, and if too long, you heard no more of it after the glass was emptied, for the instant he finished he went on deck ; he was a thorough seaman, and kind to his crew.

The easterly wind died away next day, and was succeeded by a south, and then a sou-westerly, with every appearance of a gale. Heavy masses of cloud drove past, and the long swell of the Atlantic began to rise into mountains.

“ We have plenty of sea room, Mr. Vernon,” said the captain, looking aloft at his spars ; the brig being then under double-reefed topsails, the main-boom housed, and a trysail set ; “ but there’s a sneezer a-coming before night.”

“ It looks very like it, indeed,” said Vernon ; “ but, as you say, with plenty of room and a tight ship it’s not much to be minded. If you will permit me, I will take the first watch, which will give your mate—who is a sharp, active fellow—a few hour’s rest, so that if the gale increases, it will be a relief.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Vernon, I will willingly accept your offer ; I will also turn in the first watch, and then take the second.”

Before eight bells, it blew a hurricane, the sea rising rapidly ; but the brig, under close reefed topsails, and a storm stay-sail set, appeared to suffer little, though, at times, the sea broke over her heavily.

Night set in with an increase of the wind and sea, and before the termination of the second watch, Sidney Vernon was roused from his sleep, by a loud crash. Having only thrown himself upon his mattress with his clothes on, he soon hurried upon deck and found the brig nearly on her beam ends, her main-topmast carried away, her storm stay-sail blown to ribbons, and her bowsprit gone altogether, having been struck by a tremendous sea, and a furious squall at the same time. Vernon ran to

the wheel, to speak was out of the question ; in the whole of his sea-faring life, in those latitudes, he had never experienced so furious a hurricane. The two men at the wheel were knocked down and narrowly escaped being washed overboard. Seizing the spokes, he managed to get the brig before the wind, and Captain Donald, with the rest of the crew, cut away the wreck of the bowsprit, which endangered the safety of the brig ; the sea was so tremendous that it threatened each moment to overwhelm them, and it required the entire strength of Vernon and the mate to steer ; the wreck of the main-topmast was cut away, and the fore-topsail lowered on the cap, whilst every other sail, not furled, was torn from the yards and bolt ropes ; in this state they continued to scud till morning, expecting every sea to poop the vessel, and yet not daring to lay her too.

At day-break, a thunder storm of extraordinary violence burst over them, the lightning more resembling the lightning of the tropics than that generally seen in our temperate climate. After a fearful peal the hurricane lulled like magic, but a deluge of rain followed so singularly violent that it resembled the opening of several sluices over their heads, and continued more than an hour.

“Well, God be praised,” said Captain Donald, when he could open his mouth to speak, “we have seen the worst of it. If you had not got her before the wind that critical moment, Mr. Vernon, we should have made a hole in the water. We must get preventive stays up—she has nearly rolled the foremast out of her.

The tremendous rain, in some measure, beat down the sea, and the crew having, as soon as possible taken their breakfast, set about getting everything once more into shipshape. There were plenty of spare spars and sails on board, and having tried the pumps and found that the ship was as tight as a bottle, every one recovered their spirits and energy, and so actively did all hands work, that long before four hours had passed, a new main-topmast was up, and before night the brig was again under weigh for

her destination, with a strong breeze from the south-east, and a cross, uneasy sea.

But Sidney Vernon was not fated to reach his destination in the good ship, the *Eliza*, of Leith.

They had just gained a sight of the coast of Portugal, when they were chased by a large schooner, hoisting republican colors.

"I'm d——d," said Captain Donald, "but we're getting our share of luck, Mr. Vernon; we can't show fight with eight men and a boy, a rusty gun, and as much powder as would singe the whiskers of a cat—we must try our legs, Mr. Vernon."

This proceeding by no means pleased our hero, for it's seldom you can persuade a true British sailor to run, if there is the smallest chance of making a fight of it.

The schooner that chased them appeared full of men, but in less than an hour it was very evident the *Eliza* had the advantage before the wind. Still the schooner pursued—now and then trying her guns—but the balls fell short.

"We can beat her off the wind," said Captain Donald, "but she's beating us off our port."

"Night fell, and they lost sight of their pursuer, and before morning it began again to blow hard, and so adverse, that the brig could scarcely lie up for Cape Trafalgar—no sign of the schooner was to be seen. Every hour the gale increased in severity, and before the termination of the first watch, in a tremendous squall, the *Eliza* sprang her main boom. With her trysail set, she struggled to maintain her ground, and not to drive through the straits of Gibraltar, but the gale westing and blowing a hurricane, added to the set of the current, forced Captain Donald to bear up, and drive through the straits under bare poles; nor did its fury abate for two days and nights, forcing them to scud under a balance-reefed topsail, with the starboard bulwarks entirely washed away, and one of the boats knocked to pieces.

At length the storm abated, leaving them rolling half

a wreck upon the mountainous swell that is always to be seen in the Mediterranean, with south-west gales.

"Well, upon my conscience, Mr. Vernon," said Captain Donald, that evening, as they, for the first time for three days sat enjoying a quiet dinner and a glass of Scotch toddy, "you will have devilish good reason to remember the Eliza. What's to be done now? I find we are some eighty to ninety miles from the Cape de Gatt. To work our way back through the Straits would not be doing justice to my owners; besides my call at Lisbon was not imperative, and yet to take you such a voyage out of your way, as Leghorn will be as distressing.

"Do not make yourself the least uneasy on my account," replied Vernon, "for I assure you a month or so loss of time to me is of no importance. You said you intended loading at Lisbon, on your return from Leghorn. Now, how long may your cargo and business detain you there?"

"From five to six weeks, certain," observed the Captain.

"Very good," returned our hero. "I can amuse myself remarkably well during the time, by paying a visit to Rome and Naples. I spent some very pleasant hours in Naples, at the time the Penelope was commanded by Captain Blackwood; and should like to visit it again. My only difficulty lies in getting a draft cashed I have on the house of Nigreti, Williams and Co., Lisbon."

"By my conscience, I wish you had a dozen of them," said the Captain, rubbing his hand, highly pleased at his passenger's resolution. "I'll get it cashed in ten minutes for you in Leghorn, if it was for ten thousand pounds—so there you are all right, and by this time to-morrow, I hope the old Eliza who is as tight as a drum, will look shipshape again; we have had a rough time of it, but that rascally privateer drove us out of our coast, or we should have made the Tagus the night before—at all events, the gale is spent, or all the leather is blown out of the bellows."

The next day was calm and the swell going down

temporary bulwarks were put up by the carpenter, and all other repairs made as well as possible; the main-boom strengthened, and a steady breeze springing up, they made sail for the Capo de Mele, the wind not allowing them to lie their course.

The third day they sighted the Capo de Mele, about ten miles to leeward of them. They were now in the Gulf of Genoa, and the wind came out of the gulf. The Tramontano blowing a steady, strong breeze.

As evening set in, they kept a sharp look out, hoisting lights, for so dark a night, Captain Donald declared he had seldom seen, and he was afraid of running into some of the numerous light craft that are constantly to be met in the gulf.

Vernon was awoke from a sound sleep, by a smart shock, like a ship getting aground, or touching a rock. Jumping up, and throwing on his jacket, he hurried on deck. Captain Donald was standing without his coat, looking over the stern of the brig; the Eliza had backed her fore-topsail, and the crew were anxiously looking on every side.

"I am afraid, Mr. Vernon," said the Captain, "we have sunk some small craft or other, yet I see no light." Just as he spoke, a loud hail was heard astern of them.

"Out with your long boat, Captain," said Vernon, "the craft's above water at all events; I'll go see in what state she is."

The boat was soon out, some of the men jumped in, and Vernon shipped the rudder.

"Hail the craft now my men," he exclaimed, steering the boat in the direction of the sound he had heard—a true British hail peeled over the water, and then they beheld a light, and heard a strong voice cry out in Italian, "We are sinking."

"All right!" exclaimed Vernon in the same language, "we bring you help."

They were too near the coast for the land wind, fresh as it blew, to cause more than a short, quick wave; and steering in the direction of the light, they almost came

alongside a dismasted Felucca, evidently sinking, for she lay almost even with the water, with the wreck of her spars and sails hanging about her in all directions.

"Keep quiet and cool, I beg of you," said Sidney Vernon, before he allowed the boat alongside, "if there are many, they may overturn the boat." Fortunately there were but eight individuals aboard the Felucca—she was one of the regular passage boats from Genoa to Leghorn, and as they learned afterwards, was standing in for the land, to get smoother water, and must have been crossing the brig's bows, when she was struck right amidships.

There was no time to loose, for the Felucca was sinking fast; all on board were got in the boat, with a couple of valises, belonging to the passengers, and most of the men's clothes. She had no cargo. Scarcely had this been effected, and the boat pushed off clear from the wreck of spars and rigging, before she went down head foremost.

The padrone, belonging to the Felucca, did nothing but lament over the loss of his craft—his only mode of supporting a wife and large family.

"Thank God," said our hero, "that your life is spared for future exertion. You must have kept but a bad look out, as we had lights at the mast-head, and our bell was tolled several times in each watch."

"I told our padrone," said a tall young man, evidently a gentleman by his tone and language, "I told him heard a bell, and he had better hang out lights; but he said there was no danger, and two minutes after, we were struck. I am sure, sir, we all owe our lives to your prompt assistance."

The next instant they ran alongside the brig, and on getting on deck, by the light of the ship's lanterns, they obtained a clear view of those they had placed in peril, but rescued.

Captain Donald left our hero to do the honours of the cabin to the two gentlemen passengers, while he saw after the comfort of the padrone and his crew. Vernon

was much struck with the two young signors, who, on entering the cabin, shook our hero heartily by the hand, saying, they owed their lives to him—that the padrone owed his loss to his own obstinacy, in first of all keeping too far out for a coasting Felucco, and then having no lights.

“But the old fellow must not be ruined,” said the youngest of the two, “we will make good his loss, his craft was not worth much luckily.”

“I will very willingly contribute,” said Sidney Vernon. “I am but a passenger in this brig, but her captain is as worthy and kind-hearted a man as ever trod a deck.”

After partaking of some wine and biscuit, over which the three young men became extremely intimate; the tallest of the two gave his name as Gerlotti, a captain in the king of Naples’ body guard—the other a slight and very handsome youth, elegant in person and manner, announced himself as Leon de Haro, a Spaniard by birth, travelling for amusement and information. A chance acquaintance, formed in a café in Genoa, with Captain Gerlotti, had led to their embarking together in the passage Felucca, from Genoa to Leghorn.

The rest of the night the young men spent in conversing, each mutually pleased with the other. Leon de Haro particularly seemed to attach himself to his preserver, as he persisted in styling Vernon.

Just as dawn appeared, they all lay down for a few hours’ repose, and slept, as youth without care generally does—soundly and calmly.

CHAPTER IX.

At the time of which we write, steam-vessels had not visited the Mediterranean; off the Gulf of Spezia, it became, to use a nautical expression, a dead calm, and the brig was three days reaching Leghorn, an interval occupied by the young men, thus thrown together, in forming and cementing a lasting intimacy. Military duties obliged Captain Gerlotti to repair without delay to Naples, whilst Vernon, getting his draft, on the Lisbon banker, cashed, and his wardrobe replenished, went with de Haro to Florence, to beguile away a part of the two months, Captain Donald declared he must remain at Leghorn, intending to pass the remainder with Gerlotti in Naples. With the frankness of his character and profession, Vernon related to his new friend, every particular of his previous career—his duel with Elliot, and his quitting not only the navy, but, as he then thought, England, for ever.

Leon de Haro, enthusiastic and sanguine in disposition, entered keenly and feelingly into his friend's cause, finishing a high eulogium, by exclaiming—

“You must promise, me Sidney, to visit my paternal home in the province of Andalusia. You say that you would have preferred the army to the navy, had you had a choice in the matter; as a younger son, I am destined for the army, and my father, in his last letter, says, a war with France is inevitable, for the designs of Napoleon are quite evident—I am therefore to prepare myself for a recall, as a commission is ready for me in the — regiment of cavalry, one of the most brilliant and distinguished in the king of Spain's service. My father, the Conde de Haro, is a grandee of the first rank, and my brother Garcia's property in Andalusia is immense. He is shortly to be married to the eldest daughter of the Countess de Palafox. My sister Ina, the youngest of

our family, is to be a nun." As Leon said this, he looked, Sidney thought, very sad.

"A nun!" repeated our hero, "from choice?" and he looked at Leon as he asked the question.

"That is a hard question to answer, Sidney; but another time I will let you know more of our family history. All I need say now, is, that my father is the noblest and kindest of men—and my brother Garcias, though perhaps somewhat indolent in disposition—a noble, generous hearted fellow, and the best of brothers. What I want you now to do, Sidney, is this—you are ambitious of distinction, why not enter into the service of the king of Spain? There are many of your countrymen in it already—you will in a few months speak Spanish perfectly, and my father's interest will procure you a commission in the same regiment with myself. What makes you look so serious, Sidney?"

"Nothing very particular, Leon," said Vernon with a smile, "but we will talk over this kind proposal of yours when we meet in Naples, provided you do not find the Venetian dames too fascinating, to quit in such a hurry."

"I do not think," said Leon, laughing, "that the Venetian dames will outvie the fair Florentines we see daily on the Lung D'Arno—but—wait till you see our Andalusian maidens—half Moorish—half Spanish, the taper waist, and the finely rounded ankle, and oh! the sparkle of their bright, dark eyes."

"You are eloquent, Leon; do you not think it dangerous ground for a soldier of fortune to tread—to have his brains turned by such dangerous syrens."

The following day the young men separated—Leon de Haro proceeding to Venice, Sidney Vernon to Rome.

The Spaniard did all he could to persuade his friend to accompany him to Venice, but Vernon had a great desire to visit Naples again, and he was afraid the allurements of Venice might, if both together, occasion a longer stay than he could afford. He therefore hurried on to Rome, and spending only four days in the Eternal City, reached Naples, without being stopped by the notorious bands of

brigands, that almost with impunity infested the public roads at that period.

It was rather too late in the day when he arrived in Naples, to proceed in search of Captain Gerlotti's residence, situated a short distance from the city, and having nothing better to do in the evening, he proceeded to visit the theatre of San Carlos.

As he strolled through the city, he was forcibly struck with the wide difference between its streets and those of London at night. Though London, at the period of our story, was very much indeed unlike the London of the present day, with its brilliant gases and wide thoroughfares—yet it had lights and watchmen. Naples, depended entirely on the light of heaven, and when that was obscured, it was dark in the extreme—here and there a flickering light gleamed from a small shrine in the wall of some convent or house, while everywhere the eye rested on groups of miserable looking Lazaroni, stretched over one another under porticos and church porches, forming a strange contrast with the sumptuous mansions and palaces on whose steps they reposed.

A favourite singer and dancer was expected to appear, and the gigantic San Carlos was crowded. The different loggias brilliantly lighted and adorned with magnificent mirrors, reflecting the elegance and beauty of all the aristocratic dames of Naples, astonished the mind of the young English sailor, who, at the termination of the first act, turned to gaze upon the many fair and beautiful faces around him.

As he ran his eye, (he stood in one of the front rows of the pit) along the range of boxes, his attention was attracted to one particular loggia, occupied by five persons. In front sat two females—one an extremely beautiful girl, of some nineteen or twenty years of age, with rich auburn hair, and a very fair complexion. She was elegantly if not richly attired; the expression of her fine features was, considering the place in which she sat, rather sad. The other female was a middle-aged, severe-looking dowager, so highly roughed that her face seemed inflamed,

and who looked remarkably cross, agitating a monstrous large fan, almost capable of turning a mill. Behind the elderly lady stood a signor, some years older, richly dressed, and wearing an order on his breast, sparkling with diamonds; his features were good—his forehead high and broad; but the expression of his countenance was cold, stern, and repelling; behind the fair young girl stood the tall, gaunt, stiff form of a cavalier, with several orders and decorations about his rich court-dress; his age, apparently, not more than six or seven-and-thirty; his complexion extremely sallow, his whiskers, mustachois, and beard, of a sandy colour. This cavalier, though stiff and formal in manner, appeared extremely anxious to pay as much attention as possible to the fair young girl before him, and who certainly, as far as Vernon was able to judge, evinced considerable repugnance to his civilities. The fifth person in the loggia must not, however, be forgotten, though Vernon only now and then got a glimpse of her face, and that presented one of the most wrinkled, wizened, disagreeable physiognomys he ever beheld.

Vernon could not account for the interest and curiosity he felt with respect to the inmates of that loggia; but interested he was; a great admirer of female beauty, and uncommonly fond of the society of the opposite sex, he was, perhaps, attracted by the beauty and soft expression of the fair Italian's countenance; be it as it may, he was still looking towards her when he beheld another person, a gentleman in the rich uniform of the King of Naples' body-guard, whose entrance seemed to agitate the whole party. For a moment, Sidney Vernon could not see this person's features, for passing the cavalier with the many orders, he bent down, and addressed a few words to the lovely Neapolitan. A sweet smile and a heightened colour in the fair girl's cheek, caused our hero to say to himself—"That's a lover, and a favoured one." The gentleman then looked up, and he at once recognised Captain Gerlotti, looking pale, Vernon thought, and with a care-worn expression upon his features, which was

accounted for by the black scarf upon his arm. As Captain Gerlotti addressed the young girl, the tall, stiff cavalier looked dark as night—curled his moustachios fiercely—and immediately quitted the box.

The old dowager agitated her fan in rather a dangerous manner, while her face became a deeper scarlet. The elderly gentleman at first paused, bowed stiffly, and then drew himself up haughtily.

“By Jove,” thought our hero, “my friend Gerlotti has not, I am afraid, the approbation of the elders,” for he saw the old gentleman turn round, and whisper something to the wrinkled old dame sitting at the back of the loggia, who immediately arose, and quitted the theatre.

Probably the Englishman was the only person who observed this bye-play, for the favourite of the night was on the stage, calling forth thunders of applause by her grace and agility; an encore was demanded, during which the party disappeared from the box, and Vernon who wished to see Gerlotti, tried to make a passage through the crowded pit; but ere he reached the entrance, those whom he had so much wished to overtake had departed.

As he was returning to his hotel, after partaking of some refreshment at a coffee-house, he was startled from thought by the sound of voices loudly contending, and the clash of steel. To snatch his sword from its sheath, and run to the rescue, was the look of a moment. On turning a corner, Vernon saw, by the faint light of some candles flickering round an image of the Virgin, Captain Gerlotti, with his back to a wall, defending himself against four ruffians, armed with the long, formidable, Neapolitan poignard.

“Ha! rascals,” shouted Sidney Vernon, rushing in amongst them, and, without any hesitation, striking the nearest violently with the flat of the blade across the face, while he dealt another a left-handed blow from his powerful hand, which tumbled him into the middle of the gutter.

With a volley of curses, the villains took to their heels, while Vernon burst into a laugh, at seeing the fellow in

the gutter dragged out by the leg, and hurried away with his startled comrades.

"Well, by St. Nicholas, this is singular, Signor Vernon," said Gerlotti, sheathing his sword. "Twice indebted to you for my life; for assuredly they would have slain me; that rascal you tumbled into the gutter, has given me a sharp prod in the shoulder."

"Are you bleeding much?" asked Vernon, "you had better come with me to my hotel, and send for a surgeon. Curse the cowardly scoundrels.—What a police you have! why a man might be robbed and murdered in the very heart of the city!"

"Bad enough—bad enough, Vernon," interrupted Gerlotti, binding his scarf, with Vernon's assistance, round his arm to stop the bleeding; "but as you say, a man might very easily be assassinated, that's common enough—robbery occurs seldom."

The two young men then proceeded to the hotel of the Four Nations, where Vernon was located, talking, as they went, of the singularity of their second meeting.

"This attempt to assassinate me," said Captain Gerlotti, "I can trace very easily to the author."

"Ah—I think," said Vernon, "I saw the cavalier to-night at the opera."

"The deuce you did," exclaimed Gerlotti, "you come to quick conclusions."

Our hero laughed, but made no reply; and entering the hotel they proceeded at once to Sidney Vernon's chamber. On stripping off his coat, Captain Gerlotti found it necessary to send for a surgeon, as the gash of the stiletto was deeper than he thought. The surgeon, however, after examining and dressing the wound, declared it was of little consequence, requiring only a few days rest to the limb, by keeping it in a sling.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER breakfast, the following morning, Captain Gerlotti made Sidney Vernon acquainted with the following particulars :—

“At my father’s death,” began the captain, “I became possessed of a very considerable property, out of which a handsome marriage portion was to be taken for my sister Julia. The principal part of this property consisted of mansion and extensive lands of Trastaveroni. This valuable estate, which included two large villages, had, long before my inheriting it, been disputed by another branch of the family, but my father possessed deeds and papers which incontestably proved his rights, and thus the suit instituted, never came to a hearing.

“My mother died comparatively young. About six months after that melancholy event, whilst I was absent with my regiment in Calabria, and my sister and aunt were spending a few days with a friend, a short distance from Naples, our villa caught fire in the night—no one knew how—the servants dwelling in it, had retired to rest, declaring they had left all safe and quiet ; but, notwithstanding every effort that was made to save it, the house was entirely consumed with every article in it. When I returned, I anxiously employed men to search amid the blackened ruins for the great chest, containing the deeds and papers of the Trastaveroni Estate.

“But these were totally consumed, and too late we perceived the folly of not lodging the deeds in the safe keeping of our family lawyer. The valuable plate, singular enough, was dug out but little injured, and so was the great iron lining of the chest. At this time, my dear friend, I did not lament the loss of the papers—I did not look forward to the consequences—but rebuilt the villa and improved its style, and for many months things

went on happily and smoothly. I was appointed a captain in the King's Body Guard, and thus my time was passed much at home. One morning my valet informed me that a Signor Massani, a lawyer well known for unscrupulous practices, requested an interview, and not anticipating anything particular, I received him in the saloon; when, after a few commonplace observations, he said he had taken the earliest opportunity of waiting on me to inform me, that the Signor Albano, intended renewing his claims to the Trastaveroni estate, having accidentally discovered some family papers that threw quite a new light upon the case. Now, unless I could show papers of a later date, it would be very difficult for me to upset the claims of the Signor Albano and his son. I was at once struck with a conviction that foul play was intended me, but mastering my emotion, I quietly replied, 'you are, yourself, Signor Massani, aware that my father held the estate by certain deeds, and a will, dated several months later than any other document could be. In fact, the will was made and signed by my grand uncle an hour previous to his death.'

"The Signor Massani bowed with a disagreeable kind of smile, saying, 'he had always understood so, though in fact, the papers, deeds, or the will, were never produced, for his client, the Signor Albano had abruptly abandoned the suit. Indeed,' continued the lawyer, 'I, myself, felt so convinced of your rights, that I strongly advised the Signor Albano to cease proceedings; but you see, my dear Captain Gerlotti, between ourselves, the Signor Albano is monstrously litigious, and finding this document, which—unless you possess the others—undoubtedly gives him claims upon the Estate of Trastaveroni difficult to dispute—I merely obey orders—with the papers you possess, your way is quite clear, I will now wish you good morning,' and the door closed after one of the greatest rascals that can disgrace an honorable and distinguished profession. As soon as I possibly could, for I was detained at the Palace the two following days, I waited upon our legal adviser, an old friend of

my father's, and a most conscientious and kind man. I then for the first time, told him of the loss of the family papers. He was quite confounded and sadly grieved, but said at once, 'you will lose the Trastaveroni property I fear, for you very well know that the Signor Albano was the intended heir to the estate, till your grand uncle relented, and made it up with your father. Now he evidently possesses the original will and papers, and yours are lost; to give up without a struggle appears hard, and yet if you resist and let the law take its course, your cost will be ruinous.'

"Not to weary you my dear friend, after a consultation of some of the best lawyers in Naples, I was told I had not a leg to stand on, and to the amazement of every body, the Signor Albano took triumphant possession of the Trastaveroni Estate.

"This was certainly a great trial, especially to my sister Julia—whose marriage portion was thus lost; but the dear girl thought little of herself, using all her efforts to console me. Our aunt, the Countess Morini, a rich widow, immediately came to condole with, and share her fortune with us. We still possessed the villa, and a small house property in Naples, sufficient to keep up, with my handsome pay, a respectable appearance.

"My mother's brother, who had been settled for many years in the city of Genoa, was a bachelor, extremely opulent; and when he heard of our misfortunes, he wrote to us, and declared his intention of making me his heir; and also bestow a handsome portion on Julia, provided she married with my approbation; thus, as far as fortune is concerned, we are blessed to our hearts' content. But now my dear friend, comes the pith of my story, and on which hinges my happiness or misery.

"According to the custom of many families in this country. I was early in life betrothed to Juliana Bernini. Our betrothment took place on the following conditions—The Count Bernini pledging himself to give his daughter, a fortune of eighty thousand ducats—while my father agreed to settle the whole of the Trasta-

veroni estate upon me, deducting only the marriage portion of my sister Julia. It is not very often that these early betrothments lead to happiness, but to see and to know Juliana Bernini, would be impossible, without esteeming her—I loved her passionately—and was blessed by a return of my affection. When I lost the Trastaveroni property, it just wanted six months' to Juliani's eighteenth birth day, the period fixed upon for our marriage.

“On my first visit to the Count Bernini's mansion, after the loss of the Trastaveroni property, I perceived that his manner was constrained and cold. I knew him to be a worldly-minded man, still, I thought he loved his child too well to sacrifice her happiness at the shrine of wealth; but I was mistaken. I remonstrated at first mildly and respectfully, at his evident change of conduct towards me, but he coldly and deliberately told me, that he considered the contract of marriage between his daughter and myself, to be null and void. I had lost the property, consequently, I could not fulfil the engagement my late father had pledged himself to; that a poor soldier therefore was no match for the daughter of the Count Bernini. I kept my temper, and, at that time, made no remark. A day or two after, I received a pressing letter from my uncle, requesting my presence, in Genoa, without delay. As soon as I received this letter, I had a secret meeting with Juliani, in the extensive gardens of the Berini mansion. I told her its contents, and that my relative was going to make a will in my favour, imploring her to fly with me, and proceed to Genoa. I said, I would resign my commission, but Juliana shook her head, beseeching me to wait yet awhile, as she was still in hopes her father would relent. ‘See your uncle Heurico, bring proofs of the wealth he intends leaving you; have one more interview with my father—if he still objects—there is my hand—I will no longer refuse to accede to your wishes.’ I kissed the fair hand held out to me; and the next day having obtained leave of absence, I departed for Genoa.

“My uncle received me most affectionately, listened to my love story—expressed a strong desire to see Juliana Bernini my wife—and at once offered me his own magnificent mansion, in that city of palaces, for our residence.

“I remained three months away from Naples, and when I returned with a letter from my uncle, to the Count Bernini, I found that the Marchese de Lori, the tall stiff necked cavaliero, you observed in the loggia, at the San Carlos, had proposed to the Count, for the hand of his daughter, and had been instantly accepted; though Juliana positively and indignantly declared she would never consent to receive the Marchese as a suitor.

“I immediately waited on the Count, to prove to him the generosity and liberality of my uncle; but he refused to see me; and strictly confined his daughter to her own apartments. Now, I must tell you, that in the Marchese de Lori, I have a mortal enemy. He is a nobleman of great wealth, and great influence, and a favourite with the king. Two years ago, he grossly insulted me, in public; we fought and I severely wounded him; he refused to retract his words, therefore, the moment he got well, he challenged me, and this time selected pistols—we were both wounded; he, so severely, as to confine him three months to his chamber; my wound was in the arm, and a slight one. Since then, we never meet, but a chance of a fresh encounter takes place; so you may fancy, how annoyed I felt at having the Marchese for a rival—not in Juliana’s affections, but, in her father’s, for he is resolved to force my betrothed to the altar.

“In vain I tried to get a sight of her, or even the duenna, until the evening you beheld us at the opera. Neither the frowns of the Count Bernini, or the scowls of the Marchese I was determined should prevent my speaking to Juliana—whispering to her, as she entered her father’s carriage—into which I insisted upon handing her—‘Remember your promise,’ and she, dear girl, replied with a steady clear voice—‘I do.’

"As I turned away, I found myself face to face with the Marchese de Lori; he looked daggers; but before he could speak, I said—'Marchese de Lori, any man who disputes my right to the Lady Juliana Bernini must do so at the point of the sword.'

"'Be it so, Captain Gerlotti; fortune for once may stand neuter,' and he turned away. Now I feel satisfied he it was who set those assassins upon me; they are, I am sorry to say, to be had for gold at any time and hour in this ill-regulated city, and under such a government; the very public roads are infested with bands of brigands, who rob and demand ransom with impunity.

"I have now my dear Vernon, brought my story to an end. What is next to be done I will impart to you as we stroll towards our villa residence. You will be no stranger there, for my sister Julia expects the preserver of her brother to visit Naples, and we often talk over the narrow escape Leon de Haro and I had that night the brig nearly walked over us."

The two young men then left the hotel, and passing through the crowded streets, came out upon the beautiful road that skirts the bay.

"You will see, *amico mio*," began Gerlotti, as they proceeded leisurely along, "that it will be scarcely possible for me single-handed to manage matters. And so powerful and vindictive is the Marchese de Lori, that no countryman of mine feels friendship sufficient for me to risk incurring his vengeance. Neither would I think of taxing your friendship and good nature——"

"My dear friend," interrupted Sidney, laying his hand on the Italian's shoulder, "do not hesitate one single moment in tasking my friendship to the utmost; to afford that sweet girl I saw last night one hour of happiness, I would risk the vengeance or the hate of a dozen Marchese de Lori; besides, to me his hate or his vengeance can be nought—a week or two is all I have to spend in this part of the world; therefore, if in that short time I can assist you in securing your betrothed, only show me how I can help you—never heed the consequences."

Captain Gerlotti pressed the hand of the chivalric Vernon with much emotion and gratified feelings.

"It is not always near home, or in our own circle, dear Vernon, that we find true friendship; at present, we will say no more on this subject; when I have fully prepared and matured my plans, I will tax your generosity and friendship. At present, look around you and confess, with all the faults and imperfections of its inhabitants—this is a lovely land, and this a glorious scene. Yonder, on that slight elevation, is our villa—scarcely, you see, more than four or five hundred yards from the sea."

Behind the villa the land rose gradually into rich swelling hills, covered with country mansions, surrounded with those luxuriant evergreens which flourish in such beauty in the climate of Naples.

The villa was a handsome building, and the grounds surrounding it, though small, were tastefully and well laid out, commanding a most magnificent view over Naples' unrivalled bay, which, winter or summer, is perpetually covered by innumerable crafts of many picturesque rigs, from the graceful latine sail, with its tall tapering yard towering aloft, to the majestic line-of-battle ship.

To the right lay Castello d'Ove, its dark shadows stretching far out in the sleeping waters of the bay; while the gay City of Palaces and Lazaroni lay, with the murmur of its busy and thoughtless inhabitants, to the left.

On entering the handsome saloon, a tall and very lovely girl rose up, with a slight flush on her cheek, from some writing she was engaged in, to meet her brother and his friend; at the same time, from an inner room, there entered a very elegant and stately dame, yet in the prime of life, whom Captain Gerlotti introduced to our hero as his aunt, the Contessa Morini.

Nothing could be more gracious and kind than the reception our hero received from both ladies. Captain Gerlotti's arm being in a sling at first caused some alarm, but having attributed it to a wrench he had given his shoulder by accident, and only requiring a day or two of quiet, they seemed satisfied, though Vernon more that

once caught a look of anxiety in the face of his friend's beautiful sister.

Julia Gerlotti was not more than twenty, extremely graceful and elegant, with a charming easy manner, that pleased from the first introduction, and a very short time was required to make Sidney feel as if their acquaintance was of long standing.

It was late that night when he returned to his hotel; Captain Gerlotti went with him, his duties requiring a residence in the city.

The following morning, Captain Gerlotti being engaged at the palace, Vernon enquired for a guide, or rather *valet de place*, one well acquainted with Naples and its vicinity.

A very intelligent-looking young man, sent by the landlord of the inn, waited on him.

After some few questions, concerning several places he wished to see, he asked the valet if he had been acquainted with many of the English families, who had resided in Naples during the previous winter.

"*Si, Signor*, many; I was employed by several, but especially by a rich milor, who first resided in the city for four months, and then took a country house near it; the milor's family, however, remained in Naples, and I staid to attend them; but milor Vernon——"

"Vernon!" repeated our hero; "that is the very family I wished to inquire after. But what were you going to say of Sir Christopher Vernon?"

"*Si, si, Signor*," eagerly interrupted the valet, "that was the name and title of the milor. A tall, grand signor, with great hauteur; but paid '*comme uno principe*.'"

Sidney smiled at the valet's description of his uncle.

On relating his history, and his uncle's strange conduct to him, to his friend, Leon de Haro, (when in Florence,) the young Spaniard said:

"Did it never strike you as rather singular that your worthy aunt, Lady Vernon, should have had a son and heir at so advanced a period of life—for, by your calcula-

tion, she is past four or five-and-forty, and her youngest daughter fully eighteen years old?"

Now it had not struck our hero at all—for at that period of his life he was neither given to much thought, or inclined to be suspicious. But de Haro's observation created both suspicion and thought. His uncle's violent hatred to him—his ardent desire for an heir—and his departure for Italy, which was immediately followed by the birth of a son, now appeared rather strange; not that the birth of a son was an impossible event at that age, but it certainly was a very rare one. This very remark of Leon de Haro's had been the cause of Vernon's visit to Naples. He was not covetous of wealth or rank, but still there was a feeling in his heart—a certain pride of birth, dormant hitherto, but which once roused, made him determine that, if he could prevent it, no alien to the blood of the Vernons should usurp his rights.

Pleased at finding in this young man one who had lived in his uncle's family, and recalling his friend's suspicions to his mind, he said:

"You were saying Sir Christopher Vernon took a mansion in the country, but that the family remained in Naples—did Lady Vernon remain in the city?"

"No, signor, no; my lady went with milor to the country house—for she complained of not being well in the crowded city. My lady was enciente, and a few weeks after, before assistance could be procured from the city, an heir was born to my lord; but as my lady was uncommonly well, no doctor was needed at all; she had a nurse with her, a young Neapolitan, I believe, but I never saw her, as she went away, the servants said, with her husband, who got a good situation through milor's interest."

"Then Sir Christopher's daughters," enquired Vernon, much struck with the Neapolitan's account, "remained in Naples?"

"*Sì, Signor*, they were *molto bella*, and saw much company; I was engaged from the first to attend them everywhere—for milor Vernon stopped at this hotel, and I was the first *ciceroni* sent for."

"Did Sir Christopher remain long in this country after the birth of his son?"

"No, Signor, only three, perhaps four months; they all left for Florence, on their way home."

"If it were possible, Vincentio, (the valet's name,) I should greatly like to find out the name of the nurse employed by my uncle—for Sir Christopher was my relation."

"St. Rosalia! how strange, signor," remarked the Neapolitan; "I will try—but I do not promise you that I shall succeed."

"That is as much as you can do, Vincentio," said Vernon; "and while I remain in Naples, you must consider yourself engaged to me."

The Neapolitan was much pleased; and Vernon, having nothing better to do, hired a vehicle, and proceeded with him to visit the house in the country his uncle had lived in, and to try if any one in the vicinity could remember the nurse; for the more he thought over all the circumstances, the more singular he conceived them to be.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME days passed calmly and happily at the villa, for Captain Gerlotti, having a week's relaxation, insisted on our hero's taking up his quarters there. Vernon could discover no trace of the nurse that had attended Lady Vernon—the house was inhabited by another English family. Still Vicentio was actively employed in endeavouring to trace her.

Sidney Vernon's heart ran a terrible risk from the bright sunny smiles of Julia Gerlotti, whilst the very handsome Englishman was making rapid progress in the heart of

the fair Neapolitan—when a succession of events, which we have now to record, interrupted an intimacy that looked likely to merge into a nearer and dearer tie.

“You must come with me to-night,” said Captain Gerlotti, to our hero, one evening, entering his chamber at the hotel, “to a grand ball at the Contessa de Berracco’s. You will see everybody in Naples—and, amongst them, the Signor Albano, and his beautiful ward. She is accounted the flower of our Neapolitan beauties, always excepting,” he added, “my Juliana—and, by the way, we meet to-night to arrange everything. Once introduced, you must take care of yourself.”

“Do your aunt and sister go?”

“No, for several reasons, which at another time I will explain. Now I must leave you—so be ready at ten o’clock.”

The Contessa de Berracco lived in a splendid style—her husband was the recently appointed ambassador to the court of Austria, and this ball was a farewell one.

Introduced by Captain Gerlotti, Sidney Vernon was most graciously received by the Conte and the Contessa—the latter, still in the prime of life, and a remarkably elegant woman. The saloons, gorgeously furnished, were crowded, and the blaze of beauty was dazzling.

Gerlotti, impatient to be gone, led his friend through the rooms to the one appropriated to dancing, and selecting a young lady, who, surrounded by a group of most devoted cavaliers, many with their coats bristling with diamond orders, introduced our hero as the Cavaliero Vernon; and whispering a few words in the Signora’s ear, left him to speak for himself.

Sidney Vernon was struck by the exquisite beauty of the young girl he was left standing beside; she was not more than eighteen or nineteen—very fair, with soft, intellectual blue eyes, and hair of a golden hue—together, though it was not a style of beauty he admired. he thought it was scarcely possible to behold a creature more lovely than the Signora Gavotti. Beside this young girl, sat a remarkably haughty-looking dame of some

fifty odd years, highly rouged and made up, and using a fan with such rapidity as to derange the golden curls of the fair girl beside her.

"Well, Signor Vernon. I cannot refuse you for two reasons," said the Neapolitan beauty, in answer to a request of our hero, "though I have half a dozen previous engagements to fulfil—the first is, you are not quite unknown to me, for the dearest friend I have, is Julia Gerlotti, and she told me some time ago, of your having saved her brother from drowning. The second is I knew some very handsome girls of the same name as yours; the youngest, Mary, was a dear sweet girl, and I had learned to love her, when, unfortunately, they returned to England. But we must join the dancers," placing as she spoke, a very fair and beautiful hand on Vernon's arm, as they moved on, much to the annoyance of several cavaleros.

"Pray Madam," said a tall, slight young man, richly dressed, with dark keen looking eyes, addressing the old dowager who remained seated, looking after the handsome couple, who were laughing and chatting as they went, with all the lightheartedness of happy youth. "Pray, what is the name of that young Englishman, the Signora Gavotti was introduced to, and with whom she appears to be acquainted."

"She is not acquainted with him, Signor," said the dowager, sharply. "She takes strange fancies sometimes; not but what he is a magnificent looking youth," she added, with a rather contemptuous glance at the slight figure of the Neapolitan Cavaliero. "His name is Vernon, some relation probably of that rich English Baronet, who resided here last winter."

"Ah, yes—I remember," returned the young man, with a kind of sneer on his short upper lip. "I remember, the Baronet's lady was kind enough to present him with an heir, at a period of life, when such a happy catastrophe was little expected."

In the meantime, Sidney Vernon captivated by the grace, beauty, and naivete of the Signora Gavotti, joined

the dancers. After a waltz, he strolled round the room with his beautiful partner, who, free from all affectation, chatted in the most agreeable manner; and finally he consigned her to the care of the Signora Albano—the old dowager, she was sitting beside when he was first introduced.

“Shall I introduce you to another partner, Signor Vernon?” asked the Signora Gavotti, as he was retiring.

“I prefer remaining with the remembrance of the pleasure I have had,” said Vernon. “Perhaps, before the night is over, that pleasure may be renewed?”

“Perhaps!” returned the fair girl, with a smile.

“Had our hero looked at the Signora Albano, he would have perceived a frown on her wrinkled brow; but his gaze did not travel that way, and he passed on full of thought. He wandered on, through the gay crowd, many a fair one’s eyes following his tall, graceful figure, and pensive features; for suddenly he fell into a train of thought, very foreign to the scene he was mingling in. He had strayed into a saloon, where there where few guests, and seeing a recess screened with a curtain, he drew it back, and was surprised at the sight that met his gaze. The window opened on a balcony; the moon was at its full, and a glorious flood of light fell upon the waters of the inner harbour, which lay beneath. It was like a fair unsullied mirror, so undisturbed was its glassy surface. Numbers of those gaudy coloured boats, with awnings, and under which many families sleep, winter and summer, were anchored a few yards off the long pier. Many tempted by the unusual beauty of the night, were seated without the awnings, and the sound of the Hymn to the Virgin, came up clear and distinct to the ear.

Vernon, forgetful of where he was, stood wrapped in thought, gazing out upon the calm tranquil scene, so widely different from the one within the crowded saloons. Insensibly his thoughts wandered to the past, when heroes and sages ruled, where now a nobility existed, proud only of their riches, and cradled in effeminacy and vice.

While thus meditating, the sound of a man's voice, speaking within the recess from which he was separated by a curtain, fell on his ear. The voice was vehement, and the words which he distinctly heard, made him listen attentively.

"Never!" said the speaker. "Have I not sunk deep enough into crime—plunged headlong into every vice—and at your bidding. Have I not made Gerlotti almost a beggar—robbed him of—"

"Hush, silly, weak boy—I can call you nothing else," interrupted a deep, harsh, unpleasant voice. "This is not the time or place to give way to your wild passions. Are you mad—or has that girl bewitched you?"

"Mad!" repeated the first voice with a fierce laugh. "Yes mad to have ever believed you—or ever listened to your false promises."

"Silence, boy! here comes some gay fool with little brains in his head and more gold on his waistcoat than in his pocket—come away—and take my advice—let that Englishman alone; they are a nation of bull dogs; and I tell you that man, with his iron frame, would crush you like a pipkin, if he got you in his grasp—come."

A silence followed, and then a loud and cheerful laugh. Extremely anxious to see the speaker of the strange sentences he had heard, Vernon pushed back the curtain and entered the recess, and thence the saloon. However, only a group of gay cavaleros and their partners met his gaze, none of whom could have spoken what he had heard—he therefore passed on.

"So then," thought Sidney Vernon, "Captain Gerlotti has evidently been plundered and robbed of his estate, for those persons, whoever they were, must have meant that."

He was roused from his abstraction by the sweet musical voice of the Signora Gavotti close behind him.

"Ah, Signor Vernon," said the beautiful Neapolitan, tapping his arm with her fan, "I must accuse you of negligence, forgetfulness, and a total disregard of your word!"

"Nay, fair lady, you must not judge so hastily," said Vernon with a smile. "How know you I was not seeking you."

"Oh, for the best possible reason," returned the lovely girl, quitting the arm of a grave and elderly lady, with whom she was walking, "because you actually passed me. I saw your thoughts were in the clouds, or," she added, archly looking up in his face, "or with your lady love—the fair Julia."

Vernon felt that he coloured, and that the bright eyes of his partner saw it.

"It is very delightful to see," said the Signora Gavotti, trying to look serious, "you Englishmen blush—it's a treat to see a cavaliero so sensitive; it shows, at all events, some feeling for our sex is left, and that you are not grown quite callous. I am tired of dancing, so if you are willing, we will sit down and have a little conversation, for I wish to talk to you of your namesakes."

"They are not merely namesakes," said Sidney, who was not particularly fond of dancing, and leading the Signora to a seat a little removed from the throng, "but very near relatives. Those young ladies you mentioned are first cousins of mine—their father, Sir Christopher Vernon, is my uncle."

"Ah, Madonna, how strange! Then you are, no doubt, the identical Mr. Sidney Vernon your cousin Mary spoke so feelingly and kindly of? You are a sailor; she told me you were on board some great ship, and had distinguished yourself fighting some monster of a vessel; she told me the name, but I forget it—I only know it was five times the size of your ship. So you are Mary's cousin?"

"The very same Sidney Vernon," replied our hero, with a feeling of sincere pleasure, that one of his family spoke of him with kindness.

"I loved Mary dearly," said the Neapolitan, "there never was a sweeter, gentler being. It was not that she was handsomer than her sisters, for they attracted most, they were more showy dashing girls, quite accustomed to

society. Mary was so retiring, so bashful, but when she spoke and let those clear blue eyes of hers rest upon yours, she was lovely. But, by-the-bye, I want you to confess: have you lost your heart to my dear friend Julia?"

"You allow a very short time, dear lady," said Vernon, laughing, "for an engagement of the heart."

"Perhaps so, for your cloudy and cold climate; but under this bright sunny sky of ours, hours will often do more than months, perhaps years, in your sunless land."

"Well, this is too bad," said Vernon, gaily, "all foreigners abuse old England, and fancy we live in an atmosphere of fogs, mists and vapours, with just as much sun as an Esquimaux gets in the depth of winter."

"Pray tell me, signora," he continued, after a pause in their conversation, "who is that tall, slight young man, whose dark, fierce eyes are so intently fixed upon us. Upon my word, if he continues to look so strangely I—"

"Nay," said the Signora Gavotti, looking up, and, as Sidney Vernon thought, slightly changing colour, "do not mind that cavaliero; he is my guardian's, the Signor Albano's, son—Guido Albano."

"There, I am glad he is gone," she added, with marked emphasis. "The elderly gentleman standing beside him is the Signor Albano himself. Five months more, and his guardianship ceases; but while we have time, for we must not stay long together, I wish to observe to you that your cousin Mary, when speaking to me of you, said, that the birth of her little brother would be a sad blow to your prospects, as before that you were next heir, not only to the Vernon estate, but to the earldom of Delmont."

"Now, Signor Vernon, I know something strange with respect to that. Stay, here is the Signora Albano coming for me; should I not see you again, and I may not, try and discover a female named Terese Goldoni, who formerly lived with me as lady's maid, and afterwards married a very bad, wicked man. I did not see or know anything of her for years. However Terese Goldoni lived with

your aunt at the time of Mary's brother's birth, and so did her husband, therefore do not forget her name—*Terese Goldoni*."

So saying, and before Vernon could make any remark, she wished him good night, and took the arm of the Signora Albano, who immediately led her away, and joined her husband, who stood at a short distance, observing them with a fixed, gloomy look.

"All this is very strange and unaccountable!" thought Sidney Vernon. "What am I to think? has there been foul play in the birth of that boy—is he my uncle's child or not? There is some mystery here!"

Feeling no longer any desire to remain amid the still eager votaries of pleasure, Sidney passed through the saloons, and gained the cloak-room. Throwing on his mantle, and buckling his sword to his side—a weapon he was perfectly master of, and which he was determined always to carry while at Naples.

Vincenzio, his *valet de place*, was not, as usual, in attendance, which Vernon attributed to his leaving rather early; so he issued forth to find his own way to the hotel.

It is not easy, even now, to find your way at night through some of the narrow streets of Naples; but fifty-three years ago it was much more difficult, for lamps there were none—young lazzaroni, with links or torches, might be had at the doors of theatres or assemblies; but our hero did not trouble himself with one of those gentry, satisfied that he could find his way without them. But he was mistaken, for he suddenly found himself on the broad causeway, on one side of the inner harbour. The moon had set, but the stars were brilliant; it was a lonely spot, with tall warehouses on one side, and the water on the other. Several boats, with awnings over them, were lying at anchor a few furlongs from the quay—but all was still and silent.

"Humph!" muttered our hero, "I have gone astray."

He was turning to retrace his steps, when the tall figure of a man, wrapped in a dark mantle, suddenly confronted him.

"Excuse my interrupting your progress," said the stranger, in a bold, measured voice, which Vernon recognized at once; "permit me to have a moment's conversation with you."

"You select a strange time and place for conversation, Signor Albano," replied our hero, with a calm, steady voice.

The stranger started, but haughtily replied:

"If you value your life you will hear me."

"If you have any designs on it," coldly interrupted Vernon, making a movement onwards, "you had better abandon them."

"Then your death rest on your own head," fiercely exclaimed the Signor Guido Albano, throwing back his mantle and drawing his sword, at the same time whistling shrilly.

"Assassin, as well as robber!" said our hero, stepping back, "you will rue this assault."

The next instant his sword crossed that of his furious assailant; at the third pass, it glided under the Italian's arm, inflicting a severe wound in the right side; at the same instant, he felt the point of a stiletto under his own left arm, wounding him, however, very slightly. The Signor Albano had staggered back, scarcely able to stand, while four masked assassins fiercely assaulted our hero.

This was terrible odds; nevertheless, enraged at the cowardly attack, he drove back the foremost ruffian, thrusting his sword to the very hilt in his breast; but before he could withdraw the blade, the others closed with him. Striking the nearest with his clenched hand to the ground, he drew back; and finding there was but one way to save his life, leaped over the quay, throwing his mantle from him, amidst the oaths and curses of the baffled assassins.

Having reached one of the nearest boats, he grasped the gunwale, drew himself up, and threw himself in under the awning, falling upon the outstretched body of a man covered over with sails.

A startled oath, and some violent kicks from the man beneath, trying to get rid of the weight, which was no trifle, ensued. Every saint, male and female, in the Neapolitan calendar—and Heaven knows, their name is legion—were invoked; and finally a wax candle, of the value of five farthings, was offered to St. Rosalie, if she would deliver him from the fiend.

By this time Vernon had recovered himself, rubbed his shins, which suffered most, and then gave himself a shake, which so redoubled the fears of the individual underneath, that the value of the candle rapidly increased. Our hero then got up and pulled the sail off the terrified fisherman, told him to get up, that he was not his Satanic majesty, but an Inglese, who would give him the value of a dozen candles to put him ashore.

“Una Inglese,” muttered the astounded Neapolitan, venturing to sit up and strike a light; and then, with supreme amazement, he cast a look at his visitor, first crossing himself very devoutly. “Santa Madonna! you want to go ashore. Madre mia! how did you come on board?”

“Simply by swimming,” returned our hero, laughing at the grotesque faces the man made.

“By swimming! St. Nicholas, then you could have swam back, without frightening the wits out of an old man, and making me as wet as yourself.”

“Oh, no,” said Vernon, “I have had swimming enough. Look here,” and he took out of his soaked purse a half ducat, “put me ashore near the Strada Tortoni, and this will buy you all the candles you so bountifully promised the saint.”

“I only promised the blessed saints, in case it was the evil one; but now it’s only a ‘mad Englishman!’ ” in a low voice “that alters the case.”

So saying, he pulled forth his oars, and commenced urging the boat towards the quay, where the rencontre took place—for that, after all, was the nearest part of the harbour to the Strada Tortoni.

Not a soul was to be seen—on the quay lay his mantie

and his sword—and near the latter, a pool of blood. The fisherman stood aghast.

“There has been murder!” said he.

And again the saints were invoked.

“There would have been murder, my good fellow,” said Sidney Vernon, picking up his mantle and sword. “It was some ruffians attempting to murder me, that caused me, in order to save my life, to jump into the river, and swim to your boat. I shall find my way now—there is your pay—and Buona Notte.”

“Inglese semper matto!” muttered the boatman, pocketing the half ducat, and getting back to his boat as fast as possible; while Sidney Vernon left the quay, and retracing his steps through the Strada Torton, got into the right track, and soon found his way to his hotel.

His valet had just returned, and was arranging his chamber, when he entered. The astonishment of the Neapolitan was great, when he beheld his master throw off his mantle, and discovered his ball dress, soaked in wet, and his whole person disordered.

“Eh! the saints,” exclaimed Vincentio, “you have fallen into the harbour.”

“Not quite,” said Vernon beginning to find his condition not the pleasantest in the world.

“I have certainly had a bath, but I was forced to take it, to save my life; besides which I have got the thrust of a stiletto under my left arm.”

“Madre mia!” said the valet, with real concern on his features. “You have been attacked by ruffians,” and he set about washing the blood from the wound. “How was it Signor, in the name of the saints.”

“You must keep this affair quiet, Vincentio. I have particular reasons for doing so. It is now nearly day-break. To-morrow I have something of importance to tell you, which may aid you in your enquiries after that woman that lived in the household of my uncle, Sir Christopher Vernon. At present the best thing I can do—is to sleep.”

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN GERLOTTI was early with our hero, the following morning, and was surprised at finding him still sound asleep, and his attendant Vincentio muttering sundry ejaculations over his stained garments. He was, however, soon roused and dressed, and as he proceeded with his breakfast—related to his astonished auditor, the adventures of the preceding night.

“You amaze me,” said Gerlotti. “I know, however, that young Guido Albano is capable of anything.”

“I have given him something,” said Vernon, “that will keep him quiet, if I mistake not, for some time; he must be severely wounded if not dangerously—and one of the assassins, I am sure, has had a quietus, though they carried his body off, for I felt my hilt strike his chest, but getting entangled, I lost too much time, and was near being killed myself; as it is, I have had a taste of the rascal’s poniard, but it is a mere flesh wound, which two inches of sticking plaster will cure.”

“I was always of opinion,” said Captain Gerlotti, speaking in reference to the conversation Vernon had heard, “that there was foul play in the loss of my papers and deeds. I felt satisfied even at the time, that the house was purposely set on fire, but every effort I made then, and since, has failed to discover anything; however, the day will come, yet. With respect to your encounter with young Albano, I agree with you, that it is more prudent to keep the affair quiet. Guido Albano is madly in love with the beautiful Gavotti, and she detests him. Four years ago, this turbulent youth who, by-the-bye, piques himself as being one of the best swordsmen in Naples, became concerned in an infamous plot to assassinate Count S——, and overthrow the government; the charge was not however proved against

him, and his father's wealth and influence procured his pardon, after an exile of two years.

"In his mad and passionate feelings, he must have fancied you were favoured by the beautiful Gavotti who, I may tell you, in secret, is attached to an officer of our regiment, a remarkably handsome, high spirited noble minded fellow; but, unfortunately, though a Count, and descended from a high family—he is a mere soldier of fortune. The young couple keep their attachment secret, for in a few months, the Signora Gavotti will be her own mistress, and very wealthy."

"Now, tell me something of yourself," said Vernon, finishing his breakfast, "for I feel satisfied you have some good news; that sad dog Cupid plays queer pranks, with us mortals, I suppose my day will come some time or other."

"Beware, when it does," returned Gerlotti, rather seriously. "At present (I know you will excuse my plain speaking) you are sipping the sweets, that lie on the surface—when you drink, it will be deep."

Vernon laughed, but a slight colour came into his cheek, and an unpleasant feeling cross his mind, but he made no remark to Gerlotti, who continued—

"You were kind and generous enough to promise to assist me in securing the hand of my Juliana. Things are now come to a crisis with us, for the Count Bernini is resolved to force his daughter to the altar, with the Marchese de Lori. I saw Juliana last night, and she has consented to fly with me to Genoa, to-morrow night, when I am to have everything prepared for flight, which must be by sea. As we proceed to the villa, I will explain how you can assist me."

"I am ready," said Vernon, "but first I wish to ask Vincentio a question or two, and will be with you in a moment."

Proceeding to his chamber, where he found his attendant busy with his garments, he said—

"I told you last night, Vincentio, I could give you some information that may help you in your search for

Lady Vernon's nurse. Did you ever hear the name of Terese Goldoni?"

"Terese Goldoni," repeated the valet. "No signor; but stay—Terese Goldoni, that's not the name."

"I may help you," said Vernon. "The Terese Goldoni I mean lived, some five or six years ago, with the Signora Gavotti."

"Santa Madonna—signor, I know it," exclaimed Vincentio. "*Si, si*—I remember Terese—a Florentine girl that lived with the Signora Gavotti; but though I do not remember the name she bore—I am satisfied it was not Goldoni."

"That is the name of the man she married—at least so the Signora Gavotti thought. However I have no time now to tell you more. Make some inquiries—for this Terese Goldoni is the female who lived with her husband in the household of my uncle, and the very person I wanted to find out."

"St. Nicholas! is it possible, so it was Terese Goldoni; leave it to me—I know where to make some inquiries, since that is the person you seek."

Vernon then joined Gerlotti, and together they proceeded in their walk; passing the residence of the count, and continuing their route till they reached the grounds surrounding the villa of Count Bernini, separated from the waters of the bay only by the broad level road running beside the high wall bounding the domain.

"Do you see that low door in the wall?" asked Captain Gerlotti, halting in his progress.

"I do," answered our hero.

"Now look up the hill," continued Gerlotti, "at that tall chimney, in a direct line with the door in the wall. It belongs to a great soap manufactory, and every night there is a strong fire issuing from it; you can see it distinctly some distance out in the bay. Juliana will escape through that door, and what I wish you to do, is to hire one of those fast Feluccas, that play between Naples and Leghorn, Spezio and Genoa. Everything depends on the Felucca being on the spot to-morrow

night at ten o'clock. At that time, if you send the boat to the beach opposite that door, I will be ready to embark with Juliana; with your skill and knowledge of the sea, I have every confidence—depend on the Padrone, I could not; a flaw of wind, stronger than usual, would send him scudding back into the harbour."

"All my part is very easy," said our hero; "but are you sure of your allies."

"Perfectly," said Gerlotti; "one thing more—you will have to take on board our old housekeeper, whom Juliana wishes to accompany us to Genoa. We will land you in the morning at Gaeta, so that you will get back to Naples in the evening, and be able to tell Julia and my aunt that we are all safe and well; and I trust, dear friend," continued Gerlotti, with much emotion, "we may soon meet again—if not, the remembrance of your kindness and friendship will never be forgotten."

It was a glorious evening as the Felucca, the Santa Teresa, engaged by Vernon to convey him to Genoa, unfurled her lofty latine sails to the land breeze, and shot out into the magnificent bay of Naples. Captain Gerlotti's housekeeper, a very portly and respectable-looking dame, somewhat past middle age, was on board, as well as Vincentio, who Vernon considered would be useful to send ashore with the boat. The sun went down with a degree of splendour never seen in our island home, tinging every object its rays fell upon with the colour of gold.

The Felucca, under her three picturesque sails, went rapidly through the water, casting the light, bright tiny waves from her sharp bow, till catching the rays of the setting sun, they became tinged with all the hues of the rainbow.

As he paced her short deck, (for like all vessels of her class, though nearly eighty tons, she was open midships, and covered with a dark tanned awning; her cabin was, however, very superior, long, tolerably large, and well arranged, having four excellent berths or sleeping places) our hero felt a singular anxiety creeping over him; as the hours passed, his usual buoyancy of spirit was checked,

he scarcely could say why. He thought much of Julia Gerlotti, and yet, tax his heart as he would, he could not, for his life, determine whether he loved her or not; he admired her—felt happy in her society—restless when absent from her—and yet, oh strange contrarities of the human heart, with happiness within his grasp—for Julia Gerlotti was far from indifferent to the noble person, and really generous and fine qualities, easily discernable in the young Englishman—he hesitated. The fact was, there was a restless, dissatisfied feeling in the heart of our hero at this period of his career—a thirst after adventure—of distinction of some kind; his friend Gerlotti, who was a keen observer of man's minds, and several years older, with much more experience of the world, remarked, in one of the many conversations they had—

“You are ambitious, Sidney.”

Vernon replied—

“Perhaps so, but not in the way you think, Henrico.”

“How know you that? I do not imagine you are ambitious of wealth, nor indeed of mere rank; still I think there is some spirit in you that urges you on, without you yourself being conscious to what goal it is spurring you to reach. Had you conquered your feeling of dislike, and remained in the navy, I am satisfied that you would have risen to honour and distinction; for you are passionately fond of the sea—brave to a fault, and delighting in enterprises, where danger and risk of life are most rife—therefore I say you are ambitious of being distinguished above your fellow men, and to be so, depend upon it, you will urge forward, till some soft influence gains possession of your heart and feelings; when that will take place, who can tell? but depend on it, the time will come.”

“Your being a soldier, Henrico, spoiled a famous astrologer,” returned Vernon laughing, and yet feeling that there was a great deal of truth in his friend's words.

Revenons a nos moutons—we were on the deck of the Neapolitan Felucca. The night had set in to all appearance equally fine as the day, and it became time to lay

the vessel for the place where they were to take on board, Gerlotti, and the fair Juliana Bernini.

The padrone of the Felucca was not however satisfied with the appearance of the weather, and as the little craft went about and stood in for the shore, he observed to Vernon—

“This land wind, Signor, will not last out the night, it comes off in fitful gusts; the sky to leeward also, looked like a furnace at sun-set, so glowing and fiery. In this climate at this time of the year, those are signs of a sirocco, and when that comes, it brings sea and wind altogether, even now there is a set in towards the land.”

“It is now seven o’clock (English time),” replied Vernon, “if the land wind will hold till ten o’clock, we shall care little for the change; but with a wind on shore, this bay is rough, however, for three hours we have little to fear though so late in the year. I can make out the light now from this distance.”

The padrone had been made aware that it was our hero’s intention to send the boat ashore, just in a line with the chimney of the soap manufactory. A change was rapidly coming over the face of nature. The breeze from the land began gradually to die away. Sometimes the lofty sails hung in listless folds—the next were distended by a smart breeze, and then a long lull. As they approached the shore, that peculiar sound of the sea falling on the beach was plainly heard, generally preceding a strong breeze; and then a light, grey mist began to spread over the surface of the bay. The air lost its cool, bracing feel, and a sultry temperature ensued. They were now within less than a mile from the shore, and it wanted but half an hour to the time appointed. The boat was lowered, four men entered her, and Vincentio, with full instructions from his master, took his place in the stern. The Felucca lay still and tranquil, her sails flapping idly against the masts, as she rose and fell upon the ground swell, that began rapidly to run into the bay. Those acquainted with the Mediterranean, must be aware how singularly rapid and violent are the changes in the

weather—from the clear and most unsullied sky, a small cloud will arise—a mere speck, and in an incredibly short period, a storm furious and terrible at times will ensue.

Sidney Vernon became extremely anxious, for a light air from seaward was felt, and shortly after the boat left, the sails began to rise with a south-east wind. The return of the boat with the fugitives was anxiously looked for, not only on account of those it contained, but the four persons left in the Felucca, were scarcely sufficient to manage her should a sudden gale rise.

"Thank God, they are coming!" exclaimed our hero, who was the first to perceive a dark object pulling towards them.

"By the blessed St. Nicholas, and so is the wind," said the padrone, running to the brails of the mainsail, and hauling on it with his two assistants, with might and main; and then was heard a roar aloft, like the rush of a torrent, though not a breath curled the still water upon which they lay.

Just then the boat ran alongside, and Vernon, with intense satisfaction, helped two muffled figures up the side.

"Lower away the main-yard," shouted the padrone—"quick—*Il Sorocco*."

Vernon ran off to assist, leaving Vincentio to show Gerlotti and Juliana to the cabin. Down came the blast, its first puff, as if driven fresh from a heated furnace—the fore-yard creaked and bent with the pressure of the squall, as if it would break, and the craft herself leaned over fearfully—as she did so, a loud shriek came forth from the cabin, frightening the already startled crew; down went the mainyard; and well handled—by partly hauling the foresail, as the foremost latine sail may be styled—the Felucca regained her upright position, and looked well up in the wind, standing out from the land, steadily and safe. Our hero, in the mean time, no sooner heard the shriek from below, than dropping the brail, he ran aft, and dived down the companion ladder into the cabin. If he had been startled by the shriek, he was

then perfectly confounded by the sight that met his gaze, in the little cabin of the *Felucca*.

At any other time or occasion, he would have given way to a burst of uncontrollable laughter, so extraordinary was the spectacle he beheld; but at that moment it caused him not only astonishment, but rage, vexation, and bewilderment. At first he almost fancied he was the victim of an optical delusion, for the first object he beheld, was the well remembered, wrinkled, hideous, pug-nosed *Duenna* he had seen at the *San Carlos*; there she stood before him, holding on by the side of the berth to steady herself, her other hand clenched and held out with a fierce gesture, her small grey eyes twinkling with rage and passion, her cap was off, and her bald head gave a most singularly ludicrous appearance to her pinched and wrinkled face. Opposite to her stood the portly figure of Captain Gerlotti's housekeeper, brandishing, in defiance, in her hand, what appeared to be the entire scalp of the *Duenna*.

Seated on the floor between the two belligerents, for such they undoubtedly were, was a round, bullet-headed, young man, attired in a suit of Captain Gerlotti's undress uniform; his hair standing erect with terror, his face pale as death.

As soon as this individual beheld Vernon enter the cabin, he sprang up, and made an effort to cast himself at his feet, but a sudden heel over of the *Felucca*, sent him with his bullet-head right against a chest, with the force of a twenty-four pound cannonade. At once seeing the project of flight annihilated—astonished, bewildered, and enraged, Vernon seized the man by the throat, and nearly shook the life out of him; whilst with the yell of a wild cat, the *Duenna* let go her hold of the berth, and rushed at our hero.

"Let him go," she screamed, "he is my husband, you have no right to injure him."

And with a hideous grin on her visage, she made an attempt to grasp our hero's hair, but Captain Gerlotti's worthy housekeeper was on the alert, and pounced upon

the Duenna like a tigress. Another violent heel over of the vessel, however, set matters to rights, for none of the party, except our hero, having sea legs, they lost their balance, and all rolled over on the floor. At this moment Vincentio entered the cabin.

"Santa Madonna, what is the meaning of all this, Signor—who are these people?"

"Lay hold of that fellow," exclaimed Vernon, quite incapable of keeping from laughter, notwithstanding his excessive vexation. "Place him on a bench, and let him explain the meaning of his appearance here, in the attire of Captain Gerlotti; let him speak the truth, for if I catch him lying—"

"For the blessed Virgin's sake, Signor, hear me, I'll tell nothing but the truth, I am innocent—innocent as a babe."

"Who the deuce are you, then?" impatiently interrupted Vernon, "and what on earth brought you and this infernal woman on board this vessel, and where is Captain Gerlotti?"

"Infernal indeed," screamed the Duenna, shaking her clenched hand at our hero. "Is it thus I'm thanked for risking my life in Captain Gerlotti's interest?"

And making a snatch at something black lying on the floor, she hastily placed it on her bald head, Vernon then perceiving that what he had taken to be the sca'p of the Duenna was her wig."

"Noble signor," began the man casting a look of horror at the Duenna, "I'm the gardener of the Count Bernini; I always served Captain Gerlotti faithfully and willingly, not so much for money, Signor, as the hopes I had of marrying the—"

A fierce, contemptuous laugh from the Duenna, startled the gardener, who got as far from her as the limits of the cabin allowed, while she retorted bitterly, and with a tone of triumph—

"You'll never marry her now, you miserable wretch—you are my husband."

"How, in the name of fortune," said Vernon, more

and more amazed, "came you, man, to marry this woman—old enough to be your great grandmother."

"And ugly enough," muttered Vincentio, quite loud enough to be heard, "to frighten the priest."

"The blessed Madonna help me," said the gardener with a shudder, "it was none of my doing; she may call me husband if she likes, but the name is all she will ever get from me."

"Take care you brute," screamed the Duenna, "what you asy."

"Hold your tongue, woman," exclaimed Vernon, anxious to know what had become of Captain Gerlotti and the lady Juliana; but they were all interrupted by the voice of the padrone of the Felucca, crying out down the companion—

"Signor, it's blowing a gale, I must put in for Gaeta; we can't hold our own any longer."

"Very good," returned Vernon, "do so, I will be on deck in a moment—now my man—make short work of it."

Turning to the gardener, from whose forehead the perspiration was running, both from fear and a feeling of sickness coming over him. The worthy housekeeper had already evinced symptoms of uneasiness, and the Duenna herself, notwithstanding her rage and malice, was nearly *hors de combat*.

"My business, Signor," began the gardener, "was to be at the garden-gate at nine o'clock, to let Captain Gerlotti in, and wait there till he came back, with the Lady Juliana. I was crossing the garden a little before the time fixed, when two men rushed out from behind a thick bush, and seized me—threatening to kill me if I uttered a word—they dragged me roughly to the pavilion, overlooking the bay, tied my hands and legs, and then left me, telling me they should come back before long and probably hang me; blessed saints, Signor, what I suffered—for they also stuffed a gag into my mouth, so rudely, as to cut my jaw.

"In about an hour, the door opened, and my master

entered, followed by the Marchese de Lori, and that woman there, and two men, one dressed as a priest, the other whom I never saw before, had an iron instrument in his hand, called a thumb screw.

"I threw myself upon my knees before my master ; but the Marchese, telling de Lori gave me a kick, calling me a treacherous villain, and then ordered the man with the screw to untie my hands and feet.

" 'Now look you, you rascal,' said the Marchese, telling the priest to hold the cross to me, 'take an oath, binding yourself to do whatever you are desired to-night, or with this instrument I will not leave a finger on your hand, without an affectionate squeeze. It seems you are fond of uniting others in matrimonial bonds. Therefore, Padre, unite this fool of a man to this agreeable-looking young woman,' pushing the Duenna alongside of me.

"I protested against this frightful outrage with tears, groans, and prayers ; but the Marchese, in a rage ordered the grinning wretch with the screw to seize me, and just give me a taste of it. 'Oh Signor,'—the villain though I said I was ready to do anything, seized my hand, inserted my thumb, and then gave the instrument a turn. Oh, blessed saints, what agony ; but this seemed only an amusement to the Marchese.

"My master did not seem altogether pleased, and said something to the Marchese ; but what's the use, Signor, of keeping you listening. The priest married me to that fearful woman, and then they forced me to put on the captain's garments, with a mantle and hood as also a mantle and hood for the woman.

" 'Now mark me,' said the Marchese, 'proceed both of you, through the gate down to the beach—breathe not a word till you are on board the vessel—then, when you are discovered, tell that cursed meddling Englishman—'

" 'Oh, Signor, pardon me,' continued the poor gardener, in a most imploring tone, 'but I have sworn to say it.'

" 'Tell him to go back to his bull-headed countrymen

—for if he is caught in Naples again, he will find half a dozen poniards ready sharpened for him,’ and that’s all I know of the affair—so the blessed saints can testify.”

“And pray, madam,” said Vernon, turning to the Duenna, whose features were ghastly from sea-sickness and rage, “what information can you give me on this most miserable business.”

“If I could give you any,” she returned, spitefully, “you should’nt have it—heretic as you are; and fool enough the captain was to league with them as denies the blessed saints—oh, my unfortunate head.”

Sidney Vernon beat a hasty retreat from the cabin, followed by the miserable gardener, who preferred the risk of being washed overboard to remaining below, a witness to the sorrows of his better half.

Vernon knew not what to think, or what to do; at all events, there was no remedy at that moment; to get back to Naples was the first thing to be thought of.

The Felucca bore the gale remarkably well, and ran in before morning under shelter of the Mole de Gaeta.

CHAPTER XIII.

As it was impossible, with the gale then blowing, to think of returning to Naples by sea, Vernon resolved to set out over land; but was somewhat puzzled how to manage with respect to Captain Gerlotti’s housekeeper. She, however, told him she could wait for the regular Veturino, who travelled that road three times a week. The moment the Felucca was drawn alongside the quay, the gardener scrambled over the side, and, without a word, started off as fast as his legs could carry him, amidst the laughter of the crew.

The Padrone having been paid for a voyage to Genoa,

was perfectly content at its finishing at Gaeta, where he intended remaining till the gale should go down.

Mounting post-horses, Sidney Veruon and his attendant, Vincentio, set out for Naples; the former feeling extremely anxious and uneasy concerning the fate of his friend Gerlotti. During the journey he turned over in his mind all the circumstances of the late extraordinary mishap. His first intention was to insist on a personal interview with the Marchese de Lori—reflecting over this intention, he was induced to abandon it, at least, for a time, till he had made enquiries at the villa, and heard the advice of the Countess Morini. He scarcely thought it possible, wealthy and influential as he was, that the Marchese de Lori would dare to make away with an officer in the King's own body guard, though he had attempted secretly to assassinate him; which attempt had he succeeded, was not likely to have been traced to him; but now the case was different. As he thought over this, it suddenly struck him that he ought to have secured the person of the gardener—a most important witness. However, he depended on his valet, Vincentio, for gaining information of him, while he himself consulted with Gerlotti's aunt and sister.

The morning after his return to Naples, he set out for the villa, feeling rather uncomfortable at having such sad intelligence to communicate: resolving if he obtained no account of his friend to wait upon Gerlotti's colonel, and state the whole affair to him, and then call the Marchese to an account for his insolent message to himself.

As he passed the post-office, he enquired for letters, and found one from his friend, Leon de Haro, and another from Captain Donald of the brig *Eliza*. The letter from Leon was a long one, but quite unnecessary to lay before our readers—the chief point in it being to announce his departure from Venice, and stating he should only remain three days at Rome, so that he expected to join our hero before the time fixed upon between them.

The letter from Captain Donald was to inform him,

that he would sail that day week, having received letters from his owners to proceed immediately to Genoa, to take in a valuable cargo for Liverpool. As it was out of our hero's power to be ready by that time, he entered a *cafe*, and wrote an answer to that effect, regretting much that unforeseen circumstances would prevent his leaving Naples for some time, and wishing Captain Donald a more successful run home than he had out, and returning many thanks for his kindness to him during the voyage. After despatching his letter, he proceeded to the villa. As he expected, his intelligence, which he imparted as cautiously as he could, caused intense alarm in the breasts of both aunt and sister.

"I tremble to think, Signor Vernon," said Julia Gerlotti, with tears in her eyes, "what that bad, revengeful man, the Marchese, may have done to my beloved brother. Take his life, I do not for a moment think he dare—but he may have contrived to confine him in some secure place till his designs upon the unfortunate Juliana Bernini are completed."

"I have that idea also," said the countess; that duenna of Juliana's must have betrayed them—for poor Giacomo, the gardener, is an innocent, well-intentioned creature. You may depend, Julia's attendant will hear from him, and we shall be able to get hold of him for a witness. Here is another family calamity," continued the countess, pointing to an open letter, lying on the table; "this came this morning; Julia's uncle died suddenly—burst a blood vessel, while ascending a flight of lofty stairs to a warehouse—and our presence is required immediately in Genoa."

"This is, indeed, a very sad calamity," said Vernon; "and though my poor friend thereby inherits a large fortune, he will feel this unexpected event greatly. If I gain no intelligence by to-morrow night," continued Vernon, preparing to take his leave, though kindly and pressingly requested to stay till evening, "I will certainly call upon the Duc de Montelbano, your nephew's colonel."

"You must be very cautious," said Julia, "how you

expose yourself; the marchese is a prodigious favourite with our miserably weak King Ferdinand; and the Duc de Montalbano is connected with the De Lori, therefore I pray you be cautious, and do not trust yourself abroad at night, without being well prepared."

"I never go without fire-arms," said Vernon, kissing respectfully the fair hand held out to him; "and I trust before to-morrow night to bring you more cheering intelligence."

That evening, Sidney Vernon, putting a brace of pistols in his pocket, set out alone, to reconnoitre the ground around the mansion of the Count Bernini; Vincentio had gained some slight information, from a person he knew, who sometimes served the Marchese de Lori in certain matters, not altogether justifiable; and he had promised the valet, for certain considerations, to gain further intelligence for him.

It was not a particularly fine evening—the waves rolled in heavily on the beach, with not an unpleasant sound; and our hero—who really loved the sea in all its moods, for there is beauty in all its changes, from calm to storm, if we can divest our mind of the feeling of awe which the latter inspires—was proceeding leisurely along the road, thinking of his friend, and had reached a low fence opposite the Count Bernini's garden, when he saw the private door open, and three muffled figures come into the road: and closing the door, advance towards the very spot he occupied. As they approached, he heard one of them laugh aloud, and then a harsh voice said—

"Eh Bene! and suppose he did—Diavolo—do you suppose there would be so many friends asking after his health—ha, ha, ha!—Corpo de Juda! who here would trouble themselves about a heretic's body?"

At that moment Vernon was discovered.

"Hillo!" exclaimed one of the men, drawing his stiletto "who have we here?"

Vernon walked calmly up to the bravos—for such they were. They could not perceive that he was armed, for the large Spanish mantle he wore, hid his person and arms.

"Per Christo! this Signor," said one of the rascals, with a laugh, "must pay toll for being out so late; and it looks, comrades, as if he was spying after us. Come, Signor, let us have the contents of your purse—in honour of the blessed St. Agata, whose night it is—and I faithfully promise, in consideration, the next time I offer a candle at her shrine, it shall be a four-inch one. Now, Signor."

And the stoutest of the three—and a big brute he was—held out his hand.

"Softly, gentlemen, softly," said Vernon, drawing forth his pistols; "we must have two words about that, before I permit you to bestow your donations at my expense. If you are inclined to be civil, perhaps I may enable you to make your candle eight inches instead of four."

"Sacristie! it's the English heretic himself," exclaimed the man, with one accord, nimbly retreating before the muzzles of his pistols; "here's a kick up the signor makes for asking a few pauls in honor of St. Agata."

Vernon, having seen these men come out from the Count Bernini's garden, at once conjectured that they were in the employ of either the Count or the Marchese; and knowing how easily such ruffians were to be bought, he came at once to the resolution to try and purchase their services.

"You appeared extremely willing to take a purse if you could get it. Are you willing to earn one?"

"Eh, per Baccho, Signor, only try us! You are just the signor we should like to serve."

"You have convinced me of that already," said Vernon.

"There, take that as an earnest," and he threw them his purse with a few sequins in it.

"The three sascals politely raised their hats from their heads, saying—

"Now, signor, only say what we have to do. If it's to face a whole regiment of Sbirri—"

"Basta!" exclaimed our hero. "I am satisfied of your valour. What I require of you will neither put

your courage or your stillettos to the proof. What brought you out of the Count Bernini's garden to-night?"

"Why, you see, signor," said one of the ruffians, "it's not customary for us to blab upon our employers, unless—"

"I understand," interrupted Sidney, feeling inclined to knock the rascal down, "unless you receive more for speaking than holding your tongue. How much then do you expect for preserving your employer's secret?"

"As I hope to get through purgatory cheaply, signor, we are to receive fifty golden sequins for our trouble these last three days."

"Very good," returned our hero. "Now disclose to me where the Marchese de Lori and the Count Bernini have confined Captain Gerlotti, and help me to release him, and I will pay you down a hundred golden sequins."

"Cospeto, signor," returned the men, eagerly, "we accept your conditions."

"Infernal rascal! you do, do you?" shouted a loud, harsh voice close beside them, followed by the report of a brace of pistols.

Down went one of the bravos, to all appearance, quite dead, while the other two took to their heels with the greatest rapidity. Vernon felt the wind of one of the pistol-balls fan his cheek, and turning round, beheld several dark figures rise up from the other side of the fence. One of them, he judged, though the light was not very good, to be the Marchese de Lori. Seeing the inutility of resisting, and thus lose all chance of liberating his friend, Vernon prudently followed the example of the bravos—hotly pursued by the Marchese and his domestics. Getting enraged at this pursuit, and hearing the Marchese's voice calling to his men to fire and bring him down, he turned round, and selecting the one he believed to be the Marchese, fired his pistol at him—the aim was true, the Marchese rolled over, and an end was put to the pursuit; for the domestics, terrified at the fall of their master, hastened to raise him up.

Vernon pursued his way more leisurely, miserably

disappointed at the failure he had experienced, when on the very point of gaining the intelligence he so desired. He had just reached the suburbs, when he was overtaken by the two rascals who had run away.

"Santa Madonna, Signor," said one of them, "you had a lucky escape; that was the Marchese and his domestics. It's all up with us now—so, signor, if you are of the same mind, say so, for we must quit Naples to-morrow."

"They have shot your comrade," said Vernon.

"Shot him—oh no, signor. Giacomo always goes down like a diver at the flash of the pan. When they pursued you, signor, he was off in another direction. But there is no time to lose; we will bring you, this moment, to the very spot where the captain is confined, if you will keep to your word, and pay us the hundred sequins."

"They shall be paid to you this very night," said our hero, "lead on—I pledge my sacred word."

"Basta, signor, follow us—for depend on it, they will not leave him in the same place after to-night; they only wanted to shut him up till the Marchese's marriage took place."

"Go on," said Vernon; "you need not be afraid of the Marchese interrupting us, I have spoiled his locomotion for the night."

"Sacristie, Signor," said both the men, in a tone of intense surprise, "did you return his fire?"

"Of that you may be certain; but go on, and keep your tongues quiet while we are going through the suburb."

The men proceeded at a sharp pace; Vernon followed at a short distance, rejoicing in his heart at the prospect of so soon releasing his friend, and restoring him to his sister and aunt.

At length they entered a large space of waste ground, in the middle of which stood the remains of what once must have been a large mansion, a very solitary, deserted spot, surrounded by a number of ruined walls, and dilapidated houses. In the distance the lofty trees skirting the Count Bernini's gardens could be dimly

discerned. Passing through a ruined gateway, they entered a court, at the further end of which stood a building two stories high, with all the windows blocked up.

"This is the place where the captain is confined," said one of the men, in a low voice; "I must now tell you, Signor, that he had a slight wound, but of no great moment; we couldn't secure him without a struggle, and the Marchese, in the scuffle, wounded him with his sword."

"Cowardly villain," muttered Vernon; "I shall feel no regret if I have lamed him for life."

"Don't you speak, Signor; for though there is only an old bedlamite of a woman and a young girl in the house, yet we must get in by deceiving the old hag; otherwise, it will be impossible to force the door without great noise."

The man then approached the portal, giving a peculiar knock, and whistled, in a low shrill key, but no answer was returned.

"Curse the old witch, she's dead!" said the bravo.

"Dead drunk, she may be," returned the other, "as often happens with old Jacqueline; but hush! she hears us."

A small iron grating in the door was pushed back, and a light flashed out into the court.

"Is that Giacomo?" said a wheezy, cracked voice.

"No, *Bella Madre*," said the man; "but it's me, your pet, Piero, so open the door."

"The devil's pet, you mean," growled the old woman within. "What are you come for at this hour of the night?"

"We come to relieve you of your charge," said the man calling himself Piero. "They have got scent of the captain, and we must remove him."

"Ha, they have, have they? Have you brought a sack?"

Vernon felt his heart beat at these words, for he feared that his poor friend was dead. Piero only laughed, saying—

"Not so bad as that neither, Bella Jacqueline, though *you* have the care of him."

"I wish I had the care of *you*," grumbled the old beldam, drawing back some heavy bolts, and turning a key in the lock.

The door swung back on its hinges, and as it did so, Vernon beheld by the light she carried in her hand, one of the most disgusting old women he had ever seen.

"So you wanted to put the captain into a sack, most amiable Jacqueline," exclaimed the man named Piero, as they all entered the portal.

"Ha!" screamed the old crone, "who's this?" holding up the light, and making an effort to close the door against our hero.

But Piero took the light from her hand, and grasping her by the waist, gave her a shake, which caused her to drop the keys, and then pushing her into the hall, closed and locked the door.

A torrent of invectives was bellowed forth from the enraged woman; but the two men very quietly thrust her into a room, and locked the door, leaving her to vent her malice and imprecations at her leisure.

"Now, Signor," said the men, "let us lose no time."

"And they led the way up a flight of stone steps, and crossing a very dilapidated corridor, stopped before a strong oak door, crossed with massive iron plates.

Vernon felt excessively nervous, as the men unlocked the door, fearing he scarcely knew what with respect to his friend's state.

The room was a tolerably large one; on a bed at the further end lay Captain Gerlotti, who, seeing some persons enter the chamber, looked up; but the light of the lantern falling upon the tall figure of Sidney Vernon, he recognized him at once, with a look and exclamation of joy.

The men held back, while our hero grasped the hand of his friend, who had risen from his bed, apparently not seriously hurt, but very weak from loss of blood.

"My dear Vernon—" commenced the captain.

"There is no time for explanation," said Vernon; "we had better leave this place as quickly as possible."

"You are right, Signor," said Piero, "the sooner we are away the better."

The whole party left the house, locking the doors after them; and leaving the young girl, who had remained in her room, terrified at the sight of the men, to release the amiable Jacqueline.

Throwing his mantle over his friend, Vernon gave him the support of his arm, and following the guides, in half-an-hour reached the suburb, and in another the hotel.

The moment he had seen Captain Gerlotti to his chamber, and left him to the care of the astonished Vincentio, he returned to the bravos, who received the reward promised them with a profusion of thanks—saying they would quit Naples with the dawn—or the Marchese would provide them with a berth in the galleys, a kindness he frequently did for those who served him in doing his dirty work.

Vernon made no remark, disgusted with the laxity of law and morals of the Neapolitan state and people; he was satisfied—they had served him, and he paid them, trusting he might never have to employ ruffians of their class again.

CHAPTER XIV

"THOUGH not dangerous, Captain Gerlotti," said the surgeon who had been summoned, "you have strangely neglected this sword thrust; I must insist upon great quiet for a few days, to prevent an increase of the fever you now have upon you. I was sent for to a much worse case, however, last night. The king's favourite, the Marchese de Lori, has received a pistol ball in the

knee—a duel I suppose, for he made no remark or observation—indeed, gentlemen fight now on such trivial grounds, that the less a man says in company the better. The Marchese's case is a bad one as far as his leg goes—we had a consultation, and my brethren of the lancet were of opinion the limb must be amputated. I differed with them, and so did the Marchese, for he swore stoutly they should not have his leg—we shall save that, but he will halt for life."

Captain Gerlotti looked at his friend, but neither of them made a remark, and the surgeon having finished his operations, departed, not much enlightened on the cause of the captain's wounds, any more than on that of the King's favourite.

As soon as he was gone, Captain Gerlotti said—

"We must, for Juliana's sake, keep this affair to ourselves. You have quieted the Marchese for some time, and left him a remembrance he will carry to his grave. You have, I fear, in your generosity and friendship for me, made for yourself a terrible and treacherous enemy, and this city will not be a safe place for you."

"Do not make yourself uneasy on my account," said our hero, "I feel none—a week or two will be the most I can remain in this city; for as soon as Leon de Haro has satisfied his curiosity, he will embark for Spain. I go with him; and depend upon it, the Marchese will be some time before he can plot new schemes."

A short note had been written and sent by Vincentio, to the villa, with the pleasing tidings of Captain Gerlotti's release and safety, stating also, that in the evening, he would be able to join his aunt and sister.

"I cannot but think," said our hero to his friend, "that your scheme of carrying off the lady Juliana, must have been betrayed by that old hag of a duenna. Tell me what passed."

"It certainly looks very like it," said Gerlotti, "for the moment I got through the garden gate, those three rascals, and one or two of the Marchese de Lori's confidential attendants, seized me; I made a few struggles,

and got within sword's length of the Marchese, but the rascals threw themselves upon me, and he himself made a thrust at me which gave me the wound I now suffer from. I was overpowered, and carried to the old house in which you found me; my wound bled profusely during the night, and but for the kindness of the poor girl, who procured me water and cloths, I should have suffered as much in body as in mind. The Count Bernini I did not see at all, neither do I know how my poor Juliana was treated. The death of my kind and generous uncle pains me much, but I am sure, had the Count Bernini known I had been left heir to a much larger fortune than I had lost, he would not have acted as he did."

"I tell you what, Gerlotti," said Sidney Vernon after a pause, "I have a proposal to make, and I expect you will agree before-hand."

"To anything, dear friend, you propose, I agree."

"Well then, I intend, this very day, to call upon the Count Bernini,"—an exclamation of surprise escaped the Neapolitan, but Vernon continued, "what I shall say or do I cannot promise to tell you, but I must have a *carte blanche* to do and say whatever comes into my head."

"I have benefitted so much already," said the captain, "by your friendship and courage, that I feel satisfied whatever you do or say will be for my happiness; therefore, dear friend, follow the bent of your own heart. Whatever may be the result, it can never weaken the feelings of deep gratitude we all owe you."

"Well, I shall begin to fancy myself cut out for a hero of romance, if you give me such unmerited praise. However, to the Count I will go, and the sooner the better. I may have a difficult game to play—but I hold powerful trumps in my hand."

Two hours after this conversation, our hero was standing at the door of the Count Bernini's mansion. On requesting to see the Count, he was at once shown, by one of the numerous domestics, that usually loiter about the great halls of the Neapolitan nobility, into a very splendid saloon.

The Count Bernini was seated on an ottoman, and by his side stood his daughter, the same fair, beautiful girl, our hero had seen at the San Carlos. She looked pale and agitated, and trembled as she turned round, on hearing the name of Vernon, indifferently pronounced by the domestic. The Count started to his feet, with an angry flush on his cheek; and a frown of bitter vexation was cast upon the domestic, who, however, retired, closing the door. The beautiful Neapolitan attracted all our hero's attention; and it was very evident to him, she had been weeping.

"May I request to know, sir," enquired the Count, haughtily, "to what I owe the honour of this visit?"

Anxious to relieve the mind of the fair mourner before him, from the anxiety she must be suffering, with respect to her lover's fate, Vernon replied in a calm, quiet tone—

"I have called on you Count, Bernini, purposely to relieve your mind, as well as that of your daughter, of all anxiety, respecting the health and safety of Captain Gerlotti, whom I am happy to tell you, is restored to the home he was torn from. The slight wound he received from the Marchese de Lori, is of no consequence."

"Oh! my God, how rejoiced I am," burst from the lips of Juliana, notwithstanding the frowns and fierce looks of her father.

"Madam, I request you will leave the room," said her father sternly.

Juliana obeyed; but as she did so, with a bright flush upon her cheek, and a smile, that would have won the aid of a saint; she held out her hand to our hero, saying—

"Signor, your kindness and generosity will never be forgotten by Juliana Bernini."

Sidney kissed the small beautiful hand held out to him—while the count paced the saloon in a towering rage. The next moment, the door closed, and left the gentlemen face to face. There was a something in the tall, powerful, and singularly graceful figure of the young Englishman, and a look in his calm, noble features, that awed the

count, despite his rage and vexation. Half choking with passion, he said—

“Pray, sir, may I ask, what has induced this strange and unwarrantable intrusion into the domestic concerns of my family?”

“Simply,” replied the Englishman, “for the purpose of serving my friend, and a desire, at the same time, of saving the honour and reputation of the count Bernini, from public reproach.”

“Sir, you are insulting me! What do you mean?” returned the count; but his cheek became pale, and his manner agitated under the glance of his visitor’s eyes, which were bent steadily upon him.

“I mean, count Bernini, that it is beneath the dignity and honour of an Italian nobleman, to hire common assassins to assault a gentleman, even if he were on the point of carrying off a lady to whom he was solemnly betrothed, and after assaulting and wounding him in a most cowardly attack, to infringe the law, by placing him in a miserably dilapidated house, without even offering him the smallest assistance. Lax as your institutions are, count, this would scarcely stand investigation, without bringing shame and reproach upon the name of Bernini.”

“Sir, I know nothing of Captain Gerlotti’s being wounded, neither was I aware that he was carried to any place of confinement. So far I will explain my conduct; I discovered that Captain Gerlotti intended to carry off my daughter against my will, and that you, sir, a foreigner—for though I never saw you, I heard your name,—were also engaged in the unlawful attempt to take a child from her father’s protection. My intended son-in-law, the Marchese de Lori, naturally undertook to prevent such an outrage. If Captain Gerlotti received a wound on the occasion, he merited it; as to his confinement, I was assured by the Marchese de Lori, that he would only confine him in an apartment of his own palace, till such time as his nuptials with my daughter should take place. Now, sir, the law will justify me in pro-

tecting my child; and you, yourself, are amenable to our statutes, for your uncalled for assistance in this matter."

"You formed a very favourable opinion Count Bernini," said Vernon with a smile, "of your own actions; but, nevertheless, the law will not justify your applying a thumb-screw to an unfortunate gardener, and mocking a sacred ceremony, by causing a domestic to personate a Priest." Sidney saw the count turn very pale, as he continued: "and confining a gentleman, in the king's service, in a damp unwholesome chamber, where, if he had been left two days longer, he would have died of fever."

The Count Bernini looked staggered; the quiet, determined tone and manner of the young Englishman had its effect on the Neapolitan. And Vernon now determined to play his other cards while the count seemed bewildered.

"I pray you, count," he resumed, after a short pause, "to pardon me, if in speaking of your family affairs, I appear intrusive. Captain Gerlotti was, I understand, betrothed to your daughter, the Lady Juliana, under an agreement, that a certain property should be possessed by him. Having, by trickery and fraud, lost that property—the contract became null and void. Now at this moment, count, Captain Gerlotti is possessed of wealth much more considerable than that he lost."

"What!" exclaimed the Count Bernini, with a sudden change of manner and countenance. "How is that?"

"His uncle, the wealthy merchant in Genoa, is dead, and has left the whole of his estate, &c., to his nephew and heir."

"Dead!" exclaimed the count, in the greatest astonishment, "a man still in the prime of life—dead!"

"Even so, Count Bernini; a letter has been received from Genoa, stating that he owed his death to an accident in ascending a flight of stairs to one of his warehouses. Thus Captain Gerlotti has come into a property far exceeding the one he was robbed of. You will find it impossible, even if your own natural feelings permitted you to commit so cruel an act, to force your daughter

into a union with the Marchese de Lori, who, by his base and cowardly conduct, has brought a just retribution on his own head; he may lose his leg, and if he does not, he will be lame for life. Now it is the wish of Captain Gerlotti to keep all this unhappy affair strictly secret; he bears neither ill-will or malice for the injuries inflicted on him, and is ready to bury the past in oblivion; and will, with joy and gratitude, receive the hand of your daughter, with no other dowry than her virtues and her beauty."

Whether our hero's eloquence, or the intelligence of the death of Gerlotti's uncle, and his bequeathing his vast wealth to his nephew, acted upon the count's mind, we cannot tell—perhaps both had their influence; but, at all events, the effect was striking. He seemed to think seriously for a moment, and then suddenly looking up, with an agreeable expression of countenance, said—

"I agree with you, Signor Vernon, that what has passed had better be kept secret; it is not necessary that the public should be made acquainted with the private affairs of families. The Marchese de Lori may not survive the amputation of his limb; if he does, and I sincerely trust he may, he will be long before he appears in public. My daughter this morning solemnly declared she would never wed him, therefore, though I consider that union would be for her—" happiness, he was going to say, but with a slight hesitation he substituted "welfare and position in life, I came to the determination of breaking off with the Marchese just as you, Signor, were announced. I do not deny that my daughter, accustomed to consider Captain Gerlotti as her future husband, had learned to esteem and feel an affection for him; but I was not aware that that affection was so great; and I give you my sacred honour, the cruelty exercised upon that foolish fellow, my gardener, was entirely contrary to my wishes and feelings, and has led to a coolness between the Marchese and myself. After what has passed, I think it better to leave Naples for a time; I will, therefore, proceed, with my family, to Florence, and you may assure Captain Gerlotti

that I regret the past, and will be the first to hold forth the hand of reconciliation."

"Count Bernini!" returned Vernon, his handsome features glowing with satisfaction, and with all the warm-heartedness of his nature—holding out his hand to the Neapolitan noble, who hastened to accept this truly English mode of expressing friendship and satisfaction; and so energetic was our hero in his squeezes, that the tears came into the eyes of the count, and a slight expression of pain escaped him; for our hero certainly forgot he held the small delicate hand of the Italian in his powerful grasp, giving it a pressure that was not forgotten for a time. "Count Bernini, you have made me completely happy, and I take my leave, that your fair and amiable daughter may the sooner be made acquainted with this happy change in her prospects. One single question, count, I entreat permission to ask you—was Captain Gerlotti betrayed by the Lady Juliana's duenna?"

The count smiled, hesitated a little, and then said—

"You are correct, Signor Vernon, in your conjecture. That good lady betrayed the captain on the condition of being united to the youth you found with her. The Marchese would have had the marriage performed in earnest, but I thought a mock ceremony would be a sufficient punishment for the man's betraying his master. I knew he would make his escape the moment he could, and that a sum of money would compensate the good duenna for the loss of her supposed youthful husband."

They parted, and as the door closed after the Englishman, the Count Bernini looked at his delicate fingers with rather a rueful countenance, muttering half aloud—

"A noble-looking youth, there is no denying, but the saints keep me from that Anglo-mania of shaking hands; by St. Nicholas he has a grasp like a blacksmith's vice."

CHAPTER XV.

It was evening, and our hero stood alone with his thoughts upon the Mole of Naples, gazing out into that beautiful sheet of water, so like a lake, land-locked as it is by the Island of Capri. His eyes were fixed steadily upon the fast receding hull of a handsome man-of-war brig, with the bright flag of merry England waving from her peak, and the tiny gay pennant, as it streamed out from her lofty masthead. Every stitch of canvas was spread to woo the capricious breeze that played upon the water, at times rippling its surface, and causing its mimic waves to sparkle in the last rays of the setting sun, at times flitting over the water like the breath of a Zephyr, her lofty spars and snow-white sails catching the golden rays as they shot upwards from the mighty deep.

With folded arms and abstracted thoughts Vernon stood till the golden rays faded to a faint yellow, then again bright crimson, and then gradually the short twilight of the south faded away, and the vessel he had watched so intently disappeared in the gloom; still he stood, with his eyes bent upon the ground; there was an expression of sadness, if not of regret, upon his features, as if he almost repented the position in which he had placed himself, where a word might have changed his whole destiny.

It was about ten days after his interview with the Count Bernini; in that English gun-brig, the Pandora, the Gerlottis had quitted Naples for Genoa.

The parting between Sidney Vernon and Captain Gerlotti and his sister Julia had been, to a certain extent, a painful one. It was not without a severe struggle with himself that he bade Julia Gerlotti farewell. Was it pride, feeling himself too poor to offer himself as a suitor to the fair Neapolitan? His heart answered the question—it was not.

Rousing himself from his dream of the past few weeks, he looked up as the fall of oars fell upon his ear; the sound of voices swelling richly and pleasantly on the senses. The fishermen of Naples, that strange race, were returning to their homes, and singing—only as those untaught children of the south can sing—the Evening Hymn to the Virgin.

The murmur of a vast population, mingled with the tinkling and tolling of many bells in the distance sounded harmoniously—so unlike the sounds that greet the ear, standing on London bridge, listening to the thunder and din of its mighty population, at their almost ceaseless toil.

“I am alone again,” thought Vernon, as he retraced his way into the city, “what can keep Leon de Haro! his companionship now would be invaluable, and it is past the time he promised to be in Naples.”

Entering a café he called for refreshments; taking up a Neapolitan gazette, and whilst listlessly running his eyes over its contents, the following paragraph caught his attention:—

“It must appear a strange paradox to foreign ambassadors and foreigners who now frequent our city in crowds, that our police force, enormously expensive as it is, to say nothing of the various regiments quartered at this moment in the various garrisons around Naples, should have, to all appearance, so sinecure an office, when every day proves to us that their energies and exertions should be called into action. Passing over the swarms of ruffians of every description that inhabit the purlieus of our city, committing nightly outrages, that would not be tolerated in any other city in Europe—Genoa excepted—but our most public roads are actually not safe for human life or property; several years, a notorious brigand, whose atrocities procured for him the name of ‘Fra Diavoli,’ carried on his rapine almost with impunity. He no sooner ceased to exist, but another, much more daring, but fortunately much less bloodthirsty and exacting succeeds him. This *gentleman*, as the peasantry are pleased to style him, is a

somewhat mysterious personage, and has acquired, for himself, the distinguished title of 'Fra Angelo,' in contradiction to our late friend 'Fra Diavoli,' so that the Neapolitan dominions have now the felicity of enjoying the advantages of an Angelic Road Surveyor.

This brigand, with the amiable name professes, like the knights of old, to protect the weak from the strong, with this slight difference—that as protecting the weak empties their purses, the strong are required to fill them. Accordingly, this worthy, whom all who have had the felicity of seeing him, describe differently—so differently indeed, that there is no fear whatever of ever knowing, till in the hands of that exalted personage, the hangman of Naples—which description is the right one. This brigand of Itri, as he is styled, has, like the condottieri of old, levied a tax on numerous villages, and even towns, which saves all their inhabitants from pillage. It is impossible to say how many brigands from the court of this Fra Angelo—sometimes he appears with only half a dozen; then, at the head of nearly a hundred; be it as it may, some three weeks ago, all Rome was in a state of consternation; Cardinal S—— having been stopped returning from a periodical visit to numerous convents and monasteries, and though his Eminence had nearly thirty armed domestics in his train, they were suddenly surrounded and disarmed without a single shot being fired, and his Eminence most politely accosted by Fra Angelo himself, who would not allow his Eminence to be in the least inconvenienced, begged him to have no apprehension, as the valuable church plate, which was being conveyed, together with valuable decorations, on two mules, should not, on any account, be touched. He was sorry to trouble his Eminence, but he was inconvenienced for want of a large sum—which his Eminence could oblige him with. He therefore entreated that, in consideration of his moderation, his Eminence would make no objections to leaving the donations.

“Cardinal S——, who was quite as polite as the worthy Fra Angelo—expressed himself highly gratified by the

brigand's respect for the church, ordered all the other valuables to be handed over to the obsequious and bowing bandits, and a very large sum of gold besides; and the whole troop, piously taking off their hats, received the good Cardinal's benediction, who returned to Rome, with the air of a conqueror, declaring that 'Fra Angelo was one of the handsomest and most gentlemanly persons he had ever conversed with.' But, strange to say, all the rest of his train described him as a man of about forty, with a tanned complexion, immense moustachios, and red whiskers, with a remarkably piercing pair of black eyes. No notice was taken of this affair by the Roman authorities.

"Shortly after, Fra Angelo made his appearance in the town of ———, within seven miles of our city, and requested a sum of four hundred sequins, arrears due, might be settled, as he could not call again conveniently for some time; accordingly the money was paid.

"Finally, a few days since, a party of travellers were surrounded—some plundered—others not touched—and two gentlemen of rank, foreigners, carried up into their mountain retreat for ransom.

"Now all these acts have been committed under the very noses of our military, and our mounted police force, who remain quietly smoking their cigars at their different stations. Is it not just—is it not natural, we should ask—why is this permitted? why do the people of Naples pay a monstrous tax to support a force that enjoys to the full 'the dolce far niente,' to which our countrymen, alas! are too much addicted?"

There was much more, not interesting to our hero. The part that peculiarly struck him was that relating to the plunder and taking into captivity two gentlemen, at the very period he expected his friend de Haro. He therefore resolved, the following morning, to make minute enquiries of Vincentio's brother, who was a sbirri, and an intelligent, active man.

Every day he became more anxious to leave Naples and proceed to Lisbon, where he expected to find letters

from the Tressidders, and from his uncle's solicitor; for he often thought of his friend Henry, and wondered what became of the Bon Homme Richard during the night of the tempest, in which they lost her.

One evening, on turning the corner of a street of very mean and deserted appearance, he observed two figures—one a man, speaking in loud and angry tones, the other a female; and just as he approached them, the man exclaimed—

“Curse you!—starve then,” and lifting his hand, he struck the unfortunate female so severe a blow, that she staggered and fell, uttering a cry of pain, while the wretch, who had hurt her, rushed from the spot.

“Ruffian!” exclaimed Sidney Vernon, hastening to assist the woman.

As he lifted her from the pavement, she wept passionately, exclaiming in heart-rending tones—

“Oh, better let him kill me! better die than live further dishonoured. Oh, world, world! but what ought the mother to expect, who could sell her own child even to hide her husband's shame.

Struck by the words, the tone, and the plaintive voice. Vernon said—

“I fear you are hurt—allow me to assist you—and if it is in the power of money to relieve your distress—accept this;” and he strove to press a few small gold coins into her hand.

“Ah, Madonna!” sobbed the woman, “how strange is the voice of kindness. Alas! Signor—for gold I plunged into sin—but I thank you—for this will save me from further brutality this night—and God help me—it's not probable I shall see many more.”

Struck by her gentle voice—her evident grief—and a feeling of curiosity her words created in his heart, Vernon said—

“I feel greatly for your apparently miserable situation, and would willingly shield you from a repetition of such brutal treatment as I just now witnessed. I reside at the hotel of the Four Nations—my name is Vernon—and—”

"Vernon!" almost screamed the woman.

"Oh, Madre Mia! that is the name of him who first introduced me to sin. I sold my child to him. Oh, if you are—"

"Miserable woman, beware what you say," shouted a voice close beside them.

And seizing the female in his grasp, the intruder pushed her on before him; and then turning to the surprised Vernon, said, fiercely—

"This woman is my wife—as her husband I have a right to—"

"Ruffian!" returned Vernon, "you have no right to ill-use this unfortunate woman, though she may be your wife; but I know you, your name is Goldoni."

A cry from the woman, and a blasphemous curse from the man, followed this random shot. The next moment, the man placed his foot against the door of a house, and pushing it open, thrust the woman in; and, just as Vernon was thinking whether he would be justified in seizing the man, and dragging him to a police station, he sprang within, himself closing and bolting it, with a loud, mocking laugh.

As Vernon stood, irresolute how to act, for he dared not venture to break into a man's house, on so slight a suspicion as he entertained of the ruffian's character, a window over the door was opened, and a man's head appeared in the opening.

"Many thanks, noble Signor," said the man, in a sneering tone, "for your humane care of another man's wife; but neither your gold or your services are wanted; there," and he pitched into our hero's face the coins he had given the woman, and then added—"If you are wise, take yourself out of Naples, or you will feel a knife sticking in your ribs some fine night."

Exasperated at the fellow's insolence, and satisfied he had actually stumbled upon Goldoni and his wife, Vernon, ever apt to follow the dictates of a very hasty and, sometimes, violent temper, put his shoulder to the door, regardless of consequences, intending to force it—but it was crossed by bars inside.

"So you would rob my house," shouted the man from above. "Curse me if I don't fire if you don't leave off that."

And the muzzle of a blunderbuss was protruded from the window.

By this time, the windows of two or three of the adjoining houses were opened, and several heads were protruded, exclaiming in the vile patois of the lower classes.

"What's the row? ho, ho," shouted a voice from the next house—"it's only Vergani beating his wife!"

"Peste!" exclaimed another, "can't he do that quietly, without waking his neighbours?"

"I'm not beating my wife," exclaimed the man with the blunderbuss; here's a spy of the police under my window."

"Curse the spy," screamed several voices—"hurl a brick at him."

And down came several missiles at our hero, who, finding he had got into a nest of thieves and pickpockets, the very scum of the Neapolitan population, made a hasty retreat, till he gained the corner of the next street, where he encountered two persons, wrapped in the dark brown mantles of citizens of respectability.

"Pardon me," said Vernon, addressing the strangers; "may I enquire of you the name of this street?"

"I should advise you, Signor," returned one of the strangers, an aged sober individual, "to be satisfied with the name, and not venture to inspect it. It's the quarter where all the rogues and vagabonds in Naples congregate—you are a stranger, I perceive, therefore avoid it—it's name is, however Strada Vecchia."

Thanking the strangers, he enquired his way to the street in which his hotel was situated.

On reaching his room, he summoned Vincentio.

"I have found the very persons we have been seeking," said our hero,— "I am positive of it."

He then related his adventure.

"St. Nicholas! Signor," exclaimed the valet, "there

is no doubt of it. That's the very man—what kind of a man was he?—I never saw him myself—but my brother knows him by sight."

"I could not see his features; but in person he is tall, broad-shouldered, and, I think, limps in his walk. To make sure of him—while I retain a recollection of the locality—let us go there at once—I will shew you the house; and to-morrow you can take your brother to it—and if it should turn out to be Goldoni, we can arrest him, as I understand he is a fugitive from the galleys of Palermo."

"Take your pistols, Signor," said Vincentio, "for one's life is never safe in that locality."

Placing a brace of pistols in his pocket, Vernon, followed by Vincentio, left the hotel, and in half an hour reached the street. All was, however, silent; and recognizing the house, he shewed it to Vincentio.

"I can make no mistake now," said the Neapolitan. They then returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER XVI.

WE must now introduce our readers to the family mansion of the Vernons, a handsome building of the Elizabethan style, standing on a slight elevation, obtaining, through a vista of lofty oaks, a near and beautiful view of Southampton Waters, some few miles below the town.

Three persons were in the drawing-room. At a table, with writing materials before her, was the mistress of the mansion, Lady Vernon—tall and stately in person, with a manner cold, and somewhat haughty—she was well dressed, in a foreign fashion. At her feet, rolling on a

soft, luxurious carpet, was a boy, of some three years of age—his features were good, the eyes dark and bright, but the complexion extremely embrowned for a native of England.

The child was amusing itself rolling over and over a remarkably small spaniel of the Marlborough breed, who bore the infliction with singular patience and good temper—as dogs generally do the gambols of children. Seated, with a book in her hand, at one of the windows, was a very fair young girl, with light blue eyes, flaxen hair, and graceful figure. It was the month of March, and a bright, clear day, the sun shining cheerfully out on the broad waters of the estuary—there had been a hard frost the night before—and the shrubs and lawn beneath the window sparkled in the sun's rays. Though no gay yacht of the present graceful build, swept down the stream—nor did the gigantic ocean steamer throw its volume of dense smoke and white vapour over the landscape—yet numbers of merchant craft, small and large, tacked and retacked, as they struggled up or down the stream.

Mary Vernon oftener turned her look down from the window upon the serpentine avenue that wound through the park to the front of the mansion, than upon the book she held in her hand.

We must however, digress, and go back to a period a few months previous to the opening of this chapter. Mary was the youngest daughter—her sisters had both married—made what the world called most suitable alliances—alliances in which the heart had the least possible share. Mary might, in a worldly light, have filled a still higher place in the fashionable circle—but she was a strange girl, and had resolved that her heart should have something to do with the settling her for life.

During a visit to London, the previous season, the Vernons and the Tressidders met—there was a family connection—and they became very intimate—and especially Mary and the youngest of the girls—of the same name, nearly the same age, and very similar dispositions,

they became warmly attached to each other ; and on the departure of the Tressidders to return to Cornwall, Mary Vernon accompanied them. This visit took place soon after Vernon's duel with Elliot, and whilst the family were in great uncertainty as to the fate of Henry.

One day, as the two Marys were walking in the grounds, they heard the galloping of a horse, coming up the road that skirted the lawn—Mary Tressidder turned to look over the low fence, when a wild cry of joy escaped her lips, and the words—

“Oh ! Heaven be praised ! oh, Henry, my dear brother !”

The horseman checked his steed—leaped off—jumped the fence—and the next moment was clasped in the arms of his sister, kissing her pale cheek with the most unbounded delight and affection. It is not improbable but that he would have performed the same feat on the cheek of the lovely girl beside her—for sailors, and especially midshipmen, are proverbially careless in those matters, had not Mary said—

“This is poor Sidney's cousin, Miss Mary Vernon.”

“Ah ! I could swear to it, when I look in her beautiful face,” said the young sailor, without any hesitation ; “pardon me, dear lady,” he added, seeing the hot blood mounting in her cheek and temple ; “you bear a singular likeness to the noblest fellow in existence.”

Need we describe the delight and rapture of the Tressidder family—the old gentleman felt ten years younger at this restoration of his lost son ; and that evening, Henry had to give a long account of his adventures.

We must, however, as the young sailor was too modest to make himself the hero of his own story, give them in our way. Our readers will remember that Henry Tressidder, with the master's mate, and fifteen men, were placed on board the privateer brig, to navigate her into port ; but Captain R——, of the *Penelope* frigate, whose conduct sometimes savoured of insanity, left the whole of the crew in the brig ; and though they were secured, as it was supposed, safely below, and a watch set over them, yet seventy men were a large number to be guarded by

only fifteen, and who had to work the ship besides. The brig, the reader will also remember, was under jury topmasts, which were thought sufficiently trustworthy to take her into port; but the captain forgot to calculate upon a change of weather, and saw no symptom of the tremendous gale they encountered that very night, at the commencement of which all hands were busily employed in the ship, and the captives left without watch.

The topsails were close reefed, in the first furious gust, but the fore-topmast went in the cap, and the main-topmast immediately after; at the same time shipping a tremendous sea, that started the bulk-heads, and ripped the lee bulwarks all to pieces—smashing the two boats, the privateer carried, all to atoms. Amidst the terrible confusion that ensued, and before Henry could get guns fired, as tokens of distress, to either the schooner or the frigate—the Frenchmen broke through the shattered bulkheads—gained the deck, where a terrible scene took place, amid the fearful roar of the tempest—the broken spars, hanging with their rigging about the deck—the sails torn from the bolt ropes, with heavy blocks attached to them, swinging wildly, and fearfully about the ship; while the brig, completely ungovernable, for the two men at the wheel were driven from their post, by the rush and shouts of the privateer's men, who with pieces of spars, and handspikes, were searching amid the horrors of the storm, for their late conquerors; while at times a tremendous sea would break over the brig, washing the combatants off their legs, and hurling them with terrible violence amid the broken spars and shattered boats. Henry Tressidder and the master's mate—cutlass in hand, with their backs to the main-mast—made a desperate stand; several ship's lanterns being lighted, a dozen of the privateer's men made a rush at the two brave youths, and would eventually have cut them down, had not the captain of the brig, whom we stated before, to be a smart, active officer, extremely polite, and who bore the loss of his brig, with singular good temper—rushed in between the combatants—saying—

"Hold on! they are brave garçons. Come youngsters, surrender; I like a stout heart, even in an enemy—there give in—you shall have fair treatment. Morbleu," he added, as the brig pitched into a boiling sea, drenching them in a sheet of water, "if we don't mind what we are at, we shall all find a berth in Davey's locker. Get her before the wind, lads," he roared at the top of his voice, as Henry and his comrade gave up their cutlasses. "Come, my lads, be handy—cut away those blocks—and set the fore course with a ballance reef in it."

In a marvellous space of time, the wreck of the spars were cut away, two men went to the wheel—the fore course was set, and with a number of hands it was sheeted home; and then the brig, like an obedient courser, bounded away over the breaking seas.

"We have got into precious a mess, William," said Henry Tressidder, to his companion. Let us go and find out if any of our men are killed; it is lucky the little captain of this craft is such a decent fellow."

"He's a fine little chap," said William Bishop, the mate, "but it's a cursed shame that Captain R— should have left us to manage the brig, with seventy odd prisoners on board. It's a chance but we linger many a long year in a French prison."

"Don't get that in your head," said Henry, "we may get out of this scrape yet."

On making inquiries, they found that only one man was missing—washed overboard no doubt; the rest were tolerably well off, having only received blows and contusions from handspikes and other blunt weapons. The tempest increased in violence, but the brig scudded well; and the captain thought, after consulting his chart, that they were sailing direct for Belle Isle, but he could give but a random guess at the distance, and he was not without fear of running on some of the reefs, during the darkness of the night. He therefore came to the determination of heaving the brig to, till day light, satisfied that he had completely run himself out of sight and reach of the frigate and schooner; accordingly, about

four in the morning, preparations were made for lying to, under a storm-staysail—when the appalling cry from the man on the look out, of breakers ahead, astounded and horrified every soul on board. The French commander did not however lose his presence of mind; orders were given to set the mainsail, notwithstanding the fury of the gale.

The night was intensely dark, and the roar of the pitiless tempest as it whirled by, and the din of the breakers, as they foamed over the reef, was startling. Henry Tressidder grasped his companion's hand.

"William," said the young sailor, "our hour of trial is at hand; we cannot expect to escape; the tremendous sea and the intense gloom preclude all hope—God bless you if we never met again."

The young men pressed each other's hands; there was a report like thunder—it was the mainsail split into a thousand ribbons. The brig heeled over—the next instant rising on the top of a giant wave, she was hurled amid the breaking waters, and dashed with fearful violence against the reef. The shock threw every man in the brig, off his legs; crash went the masts; again she lifted with a foaming billow, that came rolling in, and was again dashed against the huge rocks that formed the reef, and splitting in two with the shock, left her hapless crew, to struggle, for one brief moment of agony, and then their mangled remains were washed over the reef, and found a grave in the deep waters beyond.

Henry Tressidder, when the vessel first struck was standing by the mainmast, with his comrade, William Bishop, holding on by the ropes that were twisted round the mast, after cutting away the wreck of the main-topmast; he had no time for thought—he heard the crash—uttered a prayer—the next instant the mast was torn from the vessel, and he felt himself plunged into an abyss of foaming water;—he did not lose his senses, and with all the tenacity of life, held on;—for another instant he was torn through the water, and then there was a lull. Young, hardy, and full of courage, he contrived to scam-

ble on the mast; as he did so, he felt his legs grasped, the next instant he put down his hand, with the hope that it was the mate, and so it was, and he, also, with Henry's assistance, got on the mast, which drove rapidly through the water with the gale, but the sea was comparatively smooth, the reef breaking the sea.

They could not see a yard ahead, neither could they hear each other, from the roar of the tempest, and the water continually washing over them. In this way they remained nearly an hour, when the mast grounded with a violent shock, but it was on sand, and holding each other by the hand, the two youths contrived, after a sharp struggle, to gain their feet, and get a sufficient distance from the waves, so as to pause and breathe forth a heart-felt thanksgiving to a merciful Providence, that had so signally saved them from a miserable death.

Wishing to get some shelter from the tempest, for the cold began to be felt severely, they commenced climbing the sand hills, that lined the shore; they could not see beyond a few yards, but they knew that day-break could not be far off; having gained the lee side of a lofty sand hill, they found shelter and sat down, for they were exhausted after the terrible struggle they had had for their lives.

"I greatly fear," said Henry, "they have all perished on board that ill-fated brig. I had no idea we were so near the coast, for I imagined we had gained a greater distance from 'Isle Dieu,' before the tempest set in."

"There are terrible currents setting in for the bays, and great rivers, on this coast," said Henry's companion. "I wonder where we are now, for this is surely no part of the Coast of Belle Isle,"

"I think not," remarked Henry; "as well as my recollection of the chart helps me, we must have struck on the reef of rocks called the Penmarks, they lie about three miles from the shore; that's about the distance we drifted after beating over the reef. I dare say when day light comes, and, by-the-bye, there's dawn making away to the eastward, we shall see the village of Penmark.

There is a fine bight or bay, where numbers of fishing smacks lie, close to the village, if I am right."

"What will be our best plan to follow," asked Bishop, a youth some three years older than Henry Tressidder, "for if they discover us to be English, they will give us up to the next fort. You speak French like a native, not a word of Crapaud's language can I muster, except *Mounseer parlz vous sacre!*"

Henry laughed—youth, especially a midddy, will laugh in the midst of misfortune, saying—

"All along this coast of Bretagne, they speak a barbarous *patois*. Therefore tolerably good French will go down. I will pass myself off as one of the crew of the privateer, the Bon Homme Richard, lost on the Penmarks; you must lie hid in some place we shall fix on. I have some foreign cash about me. I will say I am of Bordeaux, get some provisions, and in walking about I will see if it's not possible for us, in the darkness of the night to get into a fishing boat, cut her adrift, and go to sea, provided this gale goes down, which we must wait for. I prefer the risk of crossing the channel, to passing some years, perhaps, in a French prison."

"Yes, by Jove! ten times over," said Bishop. "Day breaks rapidly, how the scud goes."

"The gale has shifted into the nor-west," said Tressidder, "the sky clears, let us go down to the beach, perhaps some poor fellow, like ourselves, may have made the land on some spar." They accordingly climbed over the sand hills, and by the light of a grey, cold, murkey morning, they cast their eyes over the troubled waters.

"I am right," said Henry, "those are the Penmark rocks, over which you see the sea breaking so tremendously; there is the tower, and look, there is a signal flag hoisted, we must have struck on the outward reef, and the direction the gale was that moment in, drove us clear of the main reef; many may have saved themselves on the island that has the tower."

"If that's a signal," said William Bishop, "the alarm of a wreck will be given to some of the coast forts."

On gaining the beach, they found only the masts, several planks, and ribs, barrels, and the stern of the long boat, with the brig's name on it; but not a single body alive or dead.

Retracing their steps, a little cheered and warmed by the breaking out of the sun through the dispersed clouds, they climbed to the summit of one of the tallest sand hills, and from thence got a view of the village of Penmark, and the narrow inlet, in which many fishing boats were riding at anchor, completely sheltered from the tremendous surf that broke on the rocks at the mouth of the creek.

"You can't stay in a better place than this," said Henry, "it's not more than a mile to the village. I intend saying I have a comrade, but that he is not able to walk, in consequence of bruises; so that my leaving the village with provisions will not cause from these simple people any remark."

Having selected a spot, that commanded a view of both the village and the coast where the wreck lay, Henry commenced his walk; he could perceive, as he traversed the great range of sand hills, several persons moving down to the beach, and by the time he had reached the village, half the male population had started for the sea shore, and he presently found himself surrounded by some thirty or forty females of all ages, and all speaking the same dialect of Bretagne with the greatest volubility. He had taken care to remove from his dress all signs of its English origin, a very easy task with a midshipman's attire; and his handsome and elegant figure, with his laughing blue eyes, made a vast impression in his favour with the village belles and dames, who listened to his account of the wreck of *Le Bon Homme Richard*, with all the varieties of expression the French language is capable of and the natives themselves capable of giving tongue to. He passed himself off as the lieutenant of the privateer.

Every kind of accommodation and food was offered him, half a dozen women volunteered to go and carry his

disabled comrade into the village, but Henry declared he would be quite able to walk; when he took him some bread and a bottle of wine; and asking if there was a cabaret in the village—he was assured there was no better in all France. Accordingly, preceded by a posse of fish women and peasantry, a few old men, and a vast number of children, he was conducted to the first cabaret in all France, a small house, with a branch stuck over the door. Here an old dame promised him a breakfast fit for a prince, and wine, *trios sous* the bottle—superb.

In the meantime, half the population of the village scampered off to the sea coast, where the pieces of wreck were washing ashore. Not the slightest suspicion existed of Henry's not being a Frenchman, for he shrugged his shoulders, winked his eyes, and gesticulated with all the fervour in his power; not that he understood one word in ten that they said, and probably they were equally ignorant of his sentences. Having satisfied his appetite with a tolerable omelette, and a bottle of sour wine, and putting one in his pocket, and as much provisions as he could carry, he set out for the sand hills, without attracting further attention. The fact was, the news of the wreck had caused all the able hands, male and female, to desert the village.

With a keen eye he had observed how the boats of the fishermen were anchored—also the state of the tide; some of the boats were large luggers, of forty to fifty tons: the smaller ones were quite open, lugger-rigged, and not more than ten or twelve tons. The creek was a long, narrow inlet, running past the village for a couple of miles; towards the mouth it was nearly half a mile wide. The boats were always afloat, but he heard some of the old fishermen say, they had provisions for a week on board, and would go off to the Penmarks when the tide served, as they could only pass the bar at the entrance of half-flood or half-ebb.

Having reached the place where he had left William Bishop, he found his companion drying his clothes. Having made him acquainted with all the particulars

that he had learned and observed, they both came to the determination of stealing down to the village during the night, launch a punt, get on board one of the small luggers, cut her cable, and let her drop out to sea with the first of the ebb.

"We shall have a tremendous sea to contend with," said Bishop, "but the wind is favourable, and after such a heavy gale, the chances are, we may make the run before another sets in."

"There is one thing," said Henry, as his companion ate with a keen appetite, the boiled eggs and bread he had brought him, "that vexes me—should we succeed, we should be depriving those poor fishermen of the means of earning their subsistence."

"It's the fortune of war, my dear fellow," said Bishop, "we cannot deprive our country of our valuable services, by too much humanity towards the enemy."

Concealed where they were they could see down to the beach, where the various parts of the unfortunate brig, were washed in. Numbers of the peasantry of the vicinity had assembled, and later in the day they could perceive that a party of six men of the coast guard had arrived, and were superintending the hauling up of the various parts of the wreck.

"It's just as well that I got out of the way of those gentry," said Henry, "I might not have deceived them."

The sand hills, where our two friends lay concealed, extended for miles to the westward along the sea-coast—to the eastward, they ended at the mouth of the little inlet of Penmarks.

During the day, the wind continued to blow extremely hard, but towards sun-set, it fell considerably, and the sky became more obscure.

"It's not pleasant looking weather, Henry," observed Bishop.

"I wish we had Vernon with us," remarked Henry. "I should not be afraid to cross the Atlantic with him, in a ten ton boat."

"By Jove, I wish he were here," returned Bishop, without feeling that Henry's observation, though he did not mean it, reflected on his abilities, for William Bishop, was a thoroughly good seaman.

Night set in, cold and gloomy, but without much wind; the tide of ebb, would make about eleven o'clock—they had no watch, nor means of judging the time, for there was no moon; in fact, it was as dark a night, as the preceding; but calculating as well as they could from the decline of day; and having had a sleep of some four hours, they commenced their way across the sand hills, after quitting which, the road to the village led across a flat marshy ground, for half a mile—then through some fields. Not a glimmer of light did they see, but every now and then they heard the bark of a village cur, outside the cabins.

"I trust," said Bishop, "we shall find oars in the punts, we must muffle them."

"Put our jackets in the rowlocks," said Henry, "and if we cannot get a punt out, we must swim on board, provided we get a glimpse of the crafts."

Just then they caught sight of a light, not many yards from them, and then came the sound of oars as if dropped into a boat. They were quite close to the creek without knowing it.

"Hist! lie down behind this bank," whispered Henry. "I see the masts of the boats, now."

As he spoke, they caught a glimpse of two figures, slipping out of a punt, and then, pulling it a few yards up the shingle, one of the men took up a lantern, and walked on, his companion following. Henry caught some of the words of their conversation as they passed by.

"What did the mounseers say?" demanded Bishop, as soon as the men were out of hearing.

"Their confounded patois is so incomprehensible, that I only made out, that the tide of ebb will soon make, and that they intend putting to sea in less than two hours, in hopes of picking up something valuable on the

Penmark rocks. We have no time to lose, so let us find the punt they left, for we are certain of oars in her."

It was so dark, that they were some time ere they could make out the boat; luckily it was a small one, so they lifted her off the shingle, and got her into the water, but were startled by the velocity of the tide as they stepped into the water up to their knees, the tide ebb of had made.

"I see two luggers," said Henry, "right opposite us, let us push the boat a few yards further up the creek; the tide runs powerfully strong, and if we miss the lugger, it is all up with us for catching her again."

This they did; and putting their jackets in the rowlocks, they commenced pulling for the luggers, keeping the boat's head up the stream, and succeeded, though not without vigorous efforts, in getting alongside the lugger which swung by a single anchor, jerking violently with the strain of the down tide.

"By Jupiter!" whispered Bishop, "if there's any nicety in the navigation out of this creek we are done for."

"Stick in the tiller, and trust to Providence, for here goes," said Henry, applying his sharp knife to the cable; in a moment it parted, and the swung right round, for he had hauled on the cable to cant she craft seaward; and thus our two adventurers drifted out towards the sea.

CHAPTER XVII.

As soon as Henry Tressidder had canted the boat's head seaward, he ran aft. William Bishop who had inserted the tiller, and was keeping the boat in the middle of the stream; for the wind, what there was of it, blew down the inlet.

"We have got hold of one of the large decked luggers, William," said Tressidder, "but so much the better, once out to sea—I must hoist a little of the fore lug, to turn the only bend there is in the creek; it is looking lighter seaward. If they do pursue us we shall have two hours start of them, and as the breeze freshens, we can make ten or twelve knots in that time, and get out of sight."

As he went forward to hoist the lug, Bishop called out—

"I see two mast heads over the bank."

"Some lugger at anchor further down," said Henry, a little startled; so hooking the yard, he commenced hoisting the lug. Bishop, having fastened the tiller, ran to help him, saying, as they run the sail up to its place—

"That's no lugger below the bend; take care it's not a French gun boat; there's usually one or more in the creeks—you remember the coast-guard men we saw this morning."

"By Jove!" returned Tressidder, "there's no help for it; if it be a frigate, we must run, there's no fighting in this case."

They both went aft, and fastening the sheet, the lugger rounded the bend at a great speed, the tide running more than five knots. As soon as they opened the wide reach of the creek, they easily perceived the tall masts or yards, showing against the clearer portion of the sky seaward; it was a long, low gun-boat, under latine sails, for the tall, tapering yards were hoisted, with the sails brailed, the foremast raking over the bows—she carried neither bowsprit nor mizen-mast.

"I wish we knew the name of this lugger," said Henry, "in case they should hail us."

They were rapidly approaching the gun-boat, which lay riding head to stream, nearly in the centre. It was still a mile to the sea, though they already began to feel its influence; the loud roar of the breakers on the rocks, at its mouth, they heard long before, but the effect of the swell outside was now felt in the creek. As they came

nearly abreast of the gun-boat, keeping as far from her as possible—a loud distinct voice hailed them, saying—

“Hillo! what lugger’s that?”

“La petite Jeanne,” bellowed Henry through his closed hands, making his voice as hoarse as he could.

“La petite Jeanne,” repeated another voice as they came abreast. “Diable! What’s the owner’s name?”

“Jaques Blaret,” roared Henry, commencing getting up the main lug.

“Tonnerre de Dieu! heave to, or let go your anchor,” shouted several voices from the guard boat.

“You wont, wont you?” shouted the same voice, a minute after, “give him the contents of your musket, sentry.”

A flash followed the words, and the whiz of a bullet through the main lug, within an unpleasant distance of William Bishop’s head, hastened the hoisting of the sail—another shot followed, but harmless; and then the noise of many voices was heard on board the gun-boat, and Henry thought he heard the order given, to up anchor, as the lugger flew down the creek.

“It’s very evident,” said Henry to his companion, “that my names by no means satisfied our worthy friends in the gun-boat; they will be after us, that’s clear; fortunately this boat sails marvellously well.”

In a few minutes they reached the mouth of the creek; a heavy swell ran in from the sea, which meeting the great run of tide from the creek, caused a violent commotion on the bar. The wind, as it often does when water is violently agitated, increased, as the lugger plunged headlong into the seas, giving them no reason to complain of dry jackets. They could not see whether the gun-boat was under weigh or not, for though the sky was clearer seaward, it was thick and hazy over the land. As they gained the open sea, they found that the wind from the north and west, or nor-west, as seamen style it, blew too fresh for the two lugs—but anxious to gain a good offing, they carried on, till the lugger was buried in foam.

"By Jove, she's a fine boat," said Henry Tressidder, taking a pull at the backstays, "I wish I had any means of getting a light, I am very anxious to have a look into the cuddy, for if this wind lasts, we shall have to run for the first Spanish port we can fetch. A norwester into the Bay of Biscay, is no joke for a twenty ton lugger to stand. Faith, the want of a compass, William, is a serious thing, but I should not be surprised if we found one in the cuddy."

In order to weather the Penmarks, the roar of the surf on which was very distinct, they were forced to tack, a task requiring their utmost exertions. After having performed that manœuvre, they reefed the main and fore-lug, for the wind kept rapidly increasing, as did the sea. Anxious to ascertain the contents of the cuddy, Henry commenced an investigation by groping about; he found that it contained four sleeping berths, and in running his hand over a shelf, he got hold of a flat tin case, which, on opening, to his great joy, he discovered to be a tinder box, with plenty of matches. Striking a light, he perceived a lantern hanging up, and inside a candle.

"Hurrah! Henry," shouted William Bishop from the stern, seeing the light flash up through the hatchway, "see if you can find a bottle of *trois sous*, as good as Bordeaux at a pinch."

"Hurrah!" bawled Henry in return, "here's a keg of water, some hard biscuit, two bottles of capital brandy, for I have tasted it, half-a-dozen dry cod, and a capital compass; we can last a month upon this store."

"Tumble up, tumble up," shouted William Bishop, as Henry felt the lugger heel greatly over, followed by a loud flap of the sails, "here's a shift of wind in the west sou-west."

"By Jove; with a south-west wind we can lie our course," said Henry, coming aft with the compass.

The wind had in truth veered to the south-west, the point where they had observed the clear sky. By the help of the compass, they put the boat's head on the right course for old England; and, slacking the sheets a

little, she went bounding over the cross seas, at the rate of seven or eight knots.

"We shall have to run the gauntlet," said Henry, handing his companion a bottle of brandy to take a draught from, which, after all they had gone through during the last twenty-four hours, was extremely refreshing—it warmed them—cheered their spirits—and increased their energies.

"I was saying," said Tressidder, "that we shall have to run the gauntlet amongst the French cruizers of Brest, unless our French build and rig saves us. I wonder if that latine-rigged gun-boat followed us."

"We shall see presently," said William Bishop. "It can't want more than two or three hours to day-break."

"Well, then, do you turn in, William, and take a couple of hours rest—for sleep we must—and afterwards I'll take my turn."

Bishop, however, wanted Henry Tressidder to take the first nap—but Henry was positive; so giving him the tiller—and placing the lantern so that a glimpse of light might fall on the compass beside him, William Bishop went into the cuddy, and tumbling into one of the rude berths, and rolling himself up in whatever he found in it, was in five minutes as sound asleep as ever he was in his life.

A craft coming out from the French coast off the Penmark rocks, with the wind at south-west, intending to make the coast of England, would find it extremely difficult to weather the numerous shoals, islands, and rocks that lie between the Penmarks and Brest, for with any westing in the wind, she would be obliged to sail along the coast as far as Brest, before she could stretch across for the coast of England. Henry Tressidder was tolerably well aware of the difficulties of the navigation—but sanguine and hopeful, he waited patiently for daylight.

Towards morning, it began to thicken in the south-west quarter; and as the dawn made, he looked back eagerly on the course they had traversed. The first object

his eyes rested on, was the white sails of the gun-boat ; there was no mistaking her remarkable latine rig. In the Mediterranean they were nearly all latine craft ; but on the broad, troubled waters of the Atlantic, it was rare to see a gun-boat similarly rigged. Very close to her, he also made out a large lugger ; they were carrying a press of canvass, and were not more than four or five miles astern of them. Right ahead of him, Henry also perceived a long reef of rocks, over which the sea was breaking furiously. To seaward were two or three small vessels, standing out from the land, from which they were not more than six or seven miles distant. Henry at once roused his companion, who was up and alert in a moment.

“ We must get on more canvass,” said Henry ; “ we lost ground on our first tack—that’s a long legged fellow, that gun boat.”

“ I wish he would snap one of his cursed long yards,” growled Bishop, letting out the reefs.

Fastening the tiller, they both, by means of a “ handy billy,” roused up the lugs to their places, though not without difficulty. They had then to haul in the sheets, to weather the reef they saw before them. The lugger had now as much sail on her as she could stagger under, and her masts bent like reeds, while she shipped a good deal of water—she was decked, fortunately, and her spars were good—still it was testing her powers severely, for it blew half a gale, and the sea was getting exceedingly cross and heavy.

“ Ha, ha, my fine fellow,” said William Bishop, looking over the stern ; “ I thought those fine taper spars were only made for summer weather—down goes her fore latine yard, and up goes a lug in its place ; by Jove, that large lugger passes her—she’s the fastest of the two after all ; but I do not think they gain a yard of us.”

“ I do not think the gun-boat does ; but I fear the lugger—she is double our size—and stands up to her canvass like a church.”

With the greatest difficulty, they weathered the long

ranges of rocks before them—the sea and wind increasing so much, that they considered it impossible to carry the canvass they had on much longer. The gun-boat, evidently, as the wind increased, gained on them—she had lowered both latine yards, and hoisted lugs, with which she sailed remarkably fast. To their surprise, the large lugger had lowered her main lug, and luffed up in the wind, setting her mizen close reefed.

A violent squall forced Henry Tressidder to lower their main-lug, for the boat buried herself a couple of planks in the sea. In fact, they thought it all over with them; but letting the sail come down by the run, she righted. It now blew a complete gale—the sea one sheet of foam, and still the little lugger went her course, enveloped in a cloud of spray. Thus they continued for an hour, watching anxiously the gun-boat, which still carrying on, being over sixty tons, had neared them to within less than a mile. A flash from her bows, followed by the deadened report of a large gun—the ball struck the water some twenty feet astern of them.

“She is sending her compliments to us, confound her,” said Henry, “and we cannot return the civility.”

“We can’t carry a rag more,” said Bishop.

Again the boom of the gun was heard, and this time it passed over their stern, cutting away the main-backstay.

“Curse the rascal,” said Bishop, “what’s to be done?”

At that moment, as they looked over the stern anxiously at their pursuer, she was struck by a furious gust of wind. The two friends could see the sheet of water cast clear over her by the fury of the squall; the same instant, as Bishop ran forward to let go their fore-lug, Henry, with a cry of joy, shouted out—

“Their foremast-lug and all is blown clean out of her.”

They had just got their lug down, and secured, when the squall struck them, drenching them with the spray it tore from the breaking seas.

"Now then, my boy, slip the tiller into a loop, and let us rouse up our lugs; we have had the worst of it—see how it lulls already after that last burst."

The sky cleared to windward, and the breeze came strongly but steadily; with their two lugs reefed, they ran rapidly from the gun-boat, who still pursued with her latine sail hoisted on her mainmast; probably not being possessed of a spare spar, they were unable to replace their broken foremast; and after two hours' chase, they saw her heave up in the wind—set a jib—and stand in for the land.

A loud cheer from the two friends testified their satisfaction; the weather was evidently settling—so much so, that after making a tolerable meal of biscuit and brandy. Henry Tressidder turned in for a few hours sleep.

That night, there came on a thick haze; but the weather moderated; the next day hazy and rain—the following cleared, and, to their infinite delight, they made out land some fourteen or fifteen miles under their larboard bow. During this short voyage, they had managed famously—contrived to light a fire, and boil the dry cod, and kept watch and watch. Not a single vessel did they see till the morning they made the land, and then several brigs and smacks were standing in for the coast. Altering their course, they stood in direct for the shore; but they were not destined to set foot on British ground just then, for on nearing the land, they saw a large ship standing out towards them.

In less than half an hour they made her out to be an English frigate; they were shortly after noticed, attracted by her French rig and build; the frigate altered her course a little, so that the lugger passed close under her stern, when she was hailed, and ordered to heave to. This order Henry Tressidder very willingly obeyed.

In a few minutes, a boat from the frigate came alongside with an officer and six men; their astonishment was great, on seeing two English officers of the British navy navigating a French lugger. The frigate was the

Nimrod, Captain Pocock, just come out of Plymouth Sound, going to cruise off Brest for a month or so.

Leaving some of the men on board the lugger, Henry Tressidder and William Bishop went on board the Nimrod.

Captain Pocock received them very kindly—congratulated them on their fortunate escape—and as he would return shortly to Plymouth, he pressed them to remain with him. To this, they both agreed; a crew of four men were put on board the lugger, to carry her into Plymouth.

From Captain Pocock, Henry learned all the particulars that had occurred on board the Penelope in Falmouth harbour—that Lieutenant Elliot, thinking his death certain, in a moment of repentance, completely cleared the character of Vernon from any suspicion of foul play; he did not die, however, but was forced to quit the service. Captain R——’s conduct was thought so extraordinary during the time he commanded the Penelope, and after, that a Court of enquiry was held, when it was clearly ascertained he was subject to fits of insanity. He accordingly left the service for a lunatic asylum.

A series of gales drove the Nimrod off her cruize, and having sprung her mizen-mast, she returned at the end of five weeks to Plymouth. Henry, who had been supplied with all kinds of necessaries by the midshipmen on board the Nimrod, with whom he became a great favourite as well as with Captain Pocock, promised, the moment he passed his examination, to rejoin them—the captain promising him his interest, and the post of third lieutenant on board the Nimrod. William Bishop also was likely to get appointed. So shaking hands with his companion, and inviting him to visit Tressidder House, Henry took the mail to Truro; there having hired a horse, he arrived at home in the manner we have described.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DURING the remainder of Mary Vernon's visit to the Tressidders, Henry, just then in his nineteenth year, became desperately, as he termed it, in love with the baronet's daughter. But the ages of both rendered any serious ideas on the subject out of the question at that period. Nevertheless, before Mary returned home, she had listened to the young sailor's tale of love; he vowed he would be as true to her as "the needle to the pole." He could fairly say, in the words of the old song:

"With black, brown, and fair, I have frolicked, 'tis true,
But I never loved any, dear Mary, but you."

Sweet Mary listened to the handsome, spirited, and light-hearted sailor with a smile; if she spoke little, her eyes said much; and Henry left for Portsmouth to stand his examination, resolving, in his own mind, to become an admiral; whilst Mary returned to her home, trusting and hoping, in her little heart, that he might escape all the dangers of a sailor's life, and whether he returned an admiral, or simply Henry Tressidder, so he was safe, and loved her faithfully, she cared not.

We return to the drawing-room of Vernon Hall, where we left pretty Mary Vernon sitting at the large bay window, with a book in her hand, gazing much more at the road leading through the park to the mansion, than to the book in her hand. The fact was, she expected Henry Tressidder, either that day or the next. She heard, by letter from his sister, that he had passed his examination with *éclat*, and had, shortly after, been appointed third lieutenant to the *Nimrod*, and that he would visit Vernon Hall ere he joined his ship, then at Spithead.

While Mary continued gazing from the window, and her mother remained seriously intent on her writing, and

the young heir equally intent on tormenting the spaniel, a travelling carriage, with four post-horses, came rapidly up the avenue. Lady Vernon raised her head with a look of anxiety, as she heard the sound of the wheels, saying :

“Whose carriage is that, Mary?”

Mary looked—it turned a tuft of trees—she recognized her father’s travelling chariot, and jumping up rapidly :

“It’s my father!”

“Ha!” exclaimed Lady Vernon, her face flushing with excitement. “Then the Earl of Delmont is dead!” and she rose from her seat so suddenly that she trod on the spaniel’s tail, which in return snapped at the boy’s fingers, who roared with fright.

A singular expression passed over Lady Vernon’s haughty features, as she looked down upon the crying child. No mother’s look of affection rested upon her heir; on the contrary, she pressed her lip hard, and a frown for an instant darkened her brow, as she said :

“Do ring, Mary, for this noisy child’s attendant; or do you take him, for I wish to be alone when your father comes in.”

“Come with me, Willy,” said Mary, in her kind, sweet voice.

The boy cast a look at his mother, bestowed a hearty kick upon the spaniel, and gave his hand to Mary, saying :

“You will kill Fido for biting Willy, won’t you, Mary?”

They had scarcely left the room when the door opened, and Sir Christopher Vernon—or rather we should say, the Earl of Delmont—entered the saloon.

Without a word, he threw himself into a chair, looking at his wife with a troubled, moody brow.

“You look fatigued and agitated,” said the countess, seating herself by his side. “I conclude the earl is dead, but your troubled look surprises me.”

“He died last night at nine o’clock,” returned the earl, in a low voice. “That has not, as you may imagine, troubled me, for I have been looking forward to the event

for some months. Yesterday I received foreign letters ; one has not only troubled, but alarms me !” He looked round the room, and then added, in a very low voice, “ Goldoni has escaped from the galleys !”

“ Good heavens !” exclaimed the countess, sinking back in her chair.

“ Yes, and worse—his wife has contrived to get out of the mad-house, and no trace of her has been discovered.”

“ I always thought,” said the Countess of Delmont, bitterly, “ that such would be the result of your ill-planned schemes ; what must follow now, shame, disgrace, and—”

“ Are you mad, Amelia, or do you wish to make me so,” said the earl, almost fiercely, getting up and pacing the room. “ No such result need follow this certainly vexatious occurrence. Goldoni can never know that through me he was condemned to the galleys for life. As to his wife, she is mad, or was mad, and no mortal will attend to her ravings ; if she attempts to show herself, she will again be confined ; and as to her or her husband finding their way to this country, it is next to impossible.”

“ And yet, William,” said the countess, “ you yourself look troubled and uneasy. If there is no danger, why feel alarmed ?”

“ I will tell you,” said the earl, halting in his walk. “ I mentioned that intelligence first. What I have now to speak of is more than unpleasant, and very extraordinary. You are aware that the late Earl of Delmont possessed great estates. Now only the estate of Delmont Park goes with the title. I am his nearest, and indeed, strange to say, only relative. Nevertheless his lawyer, Mr. Stockdale, in his letter to me, stating that the late earl’s will, in his possession, would be read immediately after the funeral, says, in a postscript—‘ Prepare yourself, my lord, for a very startling assertion, which you must hear in the late earl’s will. You must know he was remarkably eccentric, and after his return from the continent last winter, he became very strange, destroyed his former will, and made the present. I can say no more, as it would not be acting honourably to do so, but as a

friend and old college companion, I beg of you, as many persons will be present at the reading of the will, that you will betray neither agitation nor surprise at what you may hear.' Now, Amelia, this strange postscript, added to the other certainly disagreeable intelligence, renders me thoughtful and disturbed."

"Good Heavens," said the countess, with a very uneasy expression of countenance, "what can there be in this will to affect you. You were never even on terms of intimacy with the late earl; whereas your brother and the earl were long friends and great companions at college; and you know the earl offered your brother any sum of money he pleased to save him from bankruptcy. But I do believe your brother must have gone to a certain degree insane, after the loss of his wife and children, for it always struck me as strange that he should name you guardian—sole guardian—to his only son."

The grave, stern features of the Earl of Delmont became even more stern and haughty in their expression.

"My brother disgraced his family and connections by his plebeian marriage and perseverance in mercantile affairs," said the earl; "and the conduct of his son—shooting his superior officer and deserting his ship—does not reflect much honour on his relatives."

"Still," interrupted the countess, thoughtfully, "he is spoken of very highly in the leading journals; and Admiral D——, the other evening, in my hearing, said he was as gallant an officer as any in the service, and that it was a great misfortune that a somewhat hasty and sensitive nature, added to great injustice, had deprived the navy of one every way calculated to shine and distinguish himself."

The earl looked exceedingly vexed.

"I am aware," he said in reply, "that you were always partial to this headstrong youth. One of your plans," he added, bitterly, "was to marry him to our daughter Mary. I said then, as I say now, I would rather follow her to her grave, than to her bridal with one I so thoroughly hate."

"Strange," muttered the countess, "is this hate to

one who never offended you," and then in a tender tone, she said, "at all events you must be satisfied, that I lent myself, much against my will, to your views and schemes. To deprive young Vernon of this coveted title, I have deprived myself of all self-esteem, and am forced to look upon a child I detest with the eyes of a mother, fancying every soul that sees us together must perceive the deception."

"Woman! woman! what a riddle, an incomprehensible riddle you are!" bitterly exclaimed the Earl, pacing the chamber with agitated steps, his dark brows meeting in a severe frown. Stopping suddenly opposite his thoughtful countess, he said, speaking low and sternly.

"Who first put this scheme into my head? Did you not always bitterly complain of having three daughters and no son; did you not, when it was clearly ascertained that the late Earl of Delmont had not married a foreign lady of rank, but also that he never intended to marry, and that his constitution were completely shattered—did you not complain bitterly that you had no son to inherit the title and estates of the earldom?"

"I did," interrupted the countess, in a low, sad tone. "I did; it was then I thought that if Mr. Vernon married Mary, a child of mine might yet wear the coronet of a countess—I did not think of substituting an heir."

"No, perhaps not," said the earl, "but it put the idea into my head, and you made but little objection. The thing is done, done at a terrible risk of ——. No matter, it is folly to talk of what cannot, and if it could, should not be undone. To-morrow I leave for Bath, to attend the late Earl's funeral, and hear this strange will read—whatever it is, I shall be prepared for it." So saying the Earl left the room.

The Countess of Delmont remained leaning back in her chair, her hands folded, and her eyes half closed, evidently immersed in deep and painful reflection. Though a proud and haughty woman, and harsh and stern in features and manner, she was far from being either selfish or cold-hearted. Passionately attached in her youth, to her husband, and knowing his intense anxiety for an heir,

he having no son soured and embittered every moment of his life; whilst the birth of three successive daughters, as each was born, increased the unnatural hatred Sir Christopher Vernon entertained for his nephew; but when, after an interval of sixteen years from the birth of their last child, it was ascertained that the story of the Earl of Delmont's marriage with a foreign lady, by whom he had had a son and daughter, was merely one of those unhappy connections that always bring sorrow, regret, and repentance; all the former intense anxiety for an heir was awakened in the breast of Christopher Vernon, because, at his death Sidney Vernon would inherit not only the Vernon estate, but also those of the Earl of Delmont. This idea haunted him—he went abroad with his family, and as we have seen, returned with an heir to his estate and name.

Amongst their own circle this event created no very great surprise, for though unexpected, it was still quite possible. The birth of the boy, however, seemed to give no pleasure to the mother, and strange to say, Mary, with all her sweetness and lovingness of disposition, looked upon the child, not with the love she thought she ought to feel for her little brother. She blamed herself, and often asked her heart why such was the case, but the question remained unanswered. Then the thought would intrude itself, at times, that there was something unaccountable in the birth of the boy. She could not but observe her mother's aversion, and indeed that the child himself grew up without evincing any very strong affection for either father or mother.

Such was the case of affairs at Vernon Hall, on the death of the Earl of Delmont, who was carried to the grave with all the usual semblance of pomp and state. After the ceremony, a party of fifteen gentlemen, nearly and intimately connected with the deceased, assembled in the state drawing-room of Delmont Castle, a magnificent mansion of modern erection, built upon the site of an old Baronial Castle, that for several centuries had belonged to the late Earl's ancestors.

Mr. Stockdale produced the will, and after a few unimportant observations to the new Earl, who preserved a serious but undisturbed expression of countenance, opened it. We shall not trouble our readers with its voluminous contents, for it was a very lengthy and elaborate document. We will merely state two or three of the bequests. After providing for all the old domestics in his service, and bestowing handsome legacies on nearly all the gentlemen present; the lawyer came to the disposal of the large estates in Devon and Cornwall—

“To Sidney Vernon.”

As the lawyer pronounced that name, the Earl of Delmont felt a strange chill creep over him; still he mastered his countenance, which evinced no emotion whatever. “To Sidney Vernon, the only son of the late Sidney Vernon, Esquire, of so and so, I bequeath my estates of Molehurst in Devon and Strandreor and Trevally in Cornwall, to him and his heirs for ever; also whatever property I die possessed of, after all legacies, bequests, &c., &c., have been duly paid. I leave these properties to my cousin, Sidney Vernon, Esq., he being the son of my oldest and most attached friend; also, because I feel perfectly persuaded and satisfied in my own mind that if he lives, he is the true heir to the title and estates of Delmont, and that he will eventually succeed to them, and thus again unite the properties. If it so please Providence that the same Sidney Vernon should have ceased to exist before the estates of Molehurst, Strandreor, and Trevally, were bequeathed to him; then those estates shall become the property of the crown.”

Mr. Stockdale was named executor, with a very handsome legacy, and thus ended the will of the late Earl of Delmont.

During the reading, the new peer remained perfectly self-collected, and apparently unmoved, though he was quite conscious that the eyes of the several gentlemen present were, at times, fixed upon him, and when the

worthy lawyer ceased reading, the gentlemen nearest to him observed—

“How very strange, my lord, is the assertion made by his late lordship, as he must have known that your lordship had a son and heir, and that Mr. Sidney Vernon could not succeed to the earldom, either during yours or your son’s life time!”

The Earl replied with a quiet smile, that he was not at all surprised, the late Earl being so extremely eccentric as to border on insanity.

“At all events,” remarked Sir William Freemantle, to whom a legacy was left, “the estates going to your nephew must be satisfactory to you, as they remain in the family. Where is your nephew at present, my lord?”

“I really cannot say,” replied the Earl, with a stately bend of the head, and rising from his chair.

Shortly after the party separated, and the Earl, after an hour’s private conversation with Mr. Stockdale, ordered his carriage and returned to Vernon Hall.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN a former chapter, we left Sidney Vernon, retiring to rest after reconnoitring the house where the man, he supposed to be Goldoni, had entered with his unfortunate and ill-treated wife; his last instructions to his attendant Vincentio, being to bring his brother, sbirri, as early as possible in the morning.

While dressing, the next day, Vincentio and his brother entered the room.

“I think I have stumbled on the very person we have so soon long been looking for,” said Sidney, to the sbirri.

"So my brother informed me, sir. If so, I will see to securing him at once—how he has escaped detection so long puzzles me—almost every abode in that street contains a nest of ruffians; and the very house my brother described to me, on my way here, we have a mark upon. It is inhabited by a man who goes by the name of Vergani—he has a wife; but this man has but one eye, and limps in his walk. Goldoni is a tall, powerful man, is not lame, nor has he lost an eye, but we shall soon see. If you please, I shall proceed with two of my comrades and arrest him on suspicion of being this escaped convict, Goldoni. If we are wrong, it's of no consequence, you will by this means get speech of the woman he calls his wife.

"Very good," said our hero, "I will wait here till I know the result. Vincentio will accompany you, so that there may be no mistake in the house."

He then sat down to his breakfast in a very thoughtful mood. Scarcely more than half-an-hour had elapsed, from the departure of the sbirri, when Vincentio burst into the room, with a face pale as death.

"Oh, signor, blessed Madonna! only think of it—the villain has murdered his wife!"

Vernon started up from his seat, exclaiming:

"Murdered his wife! good God! is it possible?"

"St. Nicholas! there is no doubt of the fact—I saw the wretched woman myself."

"And the ruffian, have they secured him?"

"No, signor, not yet. You see, when we came to the house it was closed, and the police could not get in, so they forced the door, and searched the house. Lying on the floor, in the chamber above, was the unfortunate woman, dead—killed, my brother said, by a blow with a heavy bludgeon, or butt of a gun, on the temple. There was nothing but a miserable bed, two chairs, and a rickety table in the whole house; neither was there any paper or other article on the person of the wretched woman, who was in a miserably emaciated state, half starved."

"This is a very sad affair," said our hero, exceedingly

rexed, and feeling as if the unfortunate woman owed her sad fate to his interference the preceding night. "Is it likely that the police will capture this villain, Vincentio?"

"They feel sure they will, signor; a number of the secret police are actively employed in tracing the murderer. He surely must be caught."

"I trust he may. In the meantime, let the unfortunate woman have a decent burial—I will defray the expenses. Do you think there is any one in Naples who could identify the body as that of Goldoni's wife? I should like much to know if that ruffian was Goldoni or not—though, in my own mind, I have little doubt of the fact."

"No doubt, signor, some of the domestics of the Signora Gavotti, with whom she lived, would recognize her at once."

"True, I had forgotten that circumstance; mention this to your brother—he will know how to manage the matter, without distressing the Signora Gavotti, by letting her know of this miserable affair. By the bye, have you heard anything of the young Albano—I am sure he was badly wounded."

"Both father and son have quitted Naples, signor—at least such is the report; for the house is shut up, only three or four domestics remaining."

Vernon passed the remainder of that day in a very serious mood; he determined in his own mind to take no further steps to unravel the mystery attached to his uncle's dealings with the Goldonis. If a false heir was substituted, it could not injure him during his uncle's life-time, who might live many years—for he was not more than one or two and fifty; he would, therefore, leave things to take their course, and not torment his mind with a mystery he could see no chance at present of clearing up.

That evening Vincentio's brother waited on him. No trace of the murderer could be gained; but there existed no longer any doubt of his being Goldoni; his wife's body had been identified by the Signora Gavotti's nurse, who remembered her well; and one or two of the neighbours in the same street acknowledged, that the murderer con-

terfeited lameness, and that he had the use of both eyes, and also that Vergani was an assumed name.

Sidney Vernon paid all the expenses attending the woman's burial; and rewarded Vincentio's brother and his comrades for their exertions, but declined proceeding any further in the pursuit of the villain, leaving him to be hunted down and punished, if caught, by the laws of Naples; which place he now became extremely anxious to quit, and was overjoyed one evening when Vincentio entered the saloon, where he was on the point of sitting down to supper, and exclaiming:

"Signor de Haro is come at last, signor."

"By Jove, I am rejoiced," exclaimed our hero, starting up and seizing his hat; "where is he?"

"At the Albergo d'Aquila Nero, signor. I happened to go there half an hour ago, and heard all the waiters talking of a Spanish gentleman who had just arrived, and who had been robbed and plundered by the notorious Fra Angelo."

"Fra Angelo!" exclaimed Sidney Vernon, "I had a presentiment of this. You are sure it's the Signor de Haro?"

"Quite sure, signor. I heard the name distinctly—the signor had just ordered supper."

"A good sign, Vincentio," said our hero, with a smile, "it's clear his being robbed has not spoiled his appetite. So I will now join him instead of waiting here for mine."

Putting a small pair of pistols in his pocket—for he never went out into the streets of Naples at night, since his adventure with the Signor Albano, without that precaution—and throwing on his mantle, he proceeded at once to the hotel of the Black Eagle, rejoicing at the arrival of his friend safe and sound, though plundered.

On enquiring of the head-waiter for the Signor de Haro, the man led the way, saying as he went—"that the signor bore his loss with singular patience and good temper, for the worthy Fra Angelo had not left the signor even a night-cap."

"It is a disgrace to the government," said our hero,

as the man laid his hand on the door, "to permit such a ruffian to exist within a few miles of their capital."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders, cast a look at Vernon, and threw open the door.

Our hero entered the saloon, which was a very long one, and perceived the back of a gentleman seated at a table at the further end of the room.

"Leon, my dear fellow," exclaimed Vernon, hastily advancing towards the table, "I am glad to see you, although that rascal, Fra Angelo——"

The gentleman at the table had just stuck his fork into a fat capon, but hearing these words he turned sharp round, with the bird suspended on the fork, disclosing to the surprised and annoyed Englishman a very handsome and agreeable face, that of a young man—but certainly not that of his friend, Leon de Haro.

"I must beg you to excuse me," said Vernon; "that stupid waiter has shown me into the wrong room. I expected to see the Signor de Haro, and find I have intruded on a stranger."

The gentleman placed the roasted capon carefully on the dish, with a singular smile on his handsome features, and then rising, said—

"Perhaps you are not wrong after all, signor."

Just then the waiter entered with a couple of bottles of champagne.

"Did I not tell you I wished to see the Signor de Haro?" said Sidney Vernon, somewhat sharply.

"Signor, si—Eccolo," and he bowed to the stranger, and shrugging his shoulders, retired.

"I see," said the stranger, "a singular coincidence of name has led to this mistake."

"It is a singular coincidence, certainly," said Sidney Vernon, casting his eyes over the fine manly figure of the unknown, who was regarding the powerful and graceful frame of the Englishman with evident admiration; and then, casting a glance at the smoking capon and its tempting sauce, as much as to say his supper was cooling, and that he could dispense with any further delay.

But Vernon was by no means satisfied. De Haro was no common name, and there was a something in the glance of the stranger's dark eyes—a restlessness—that excited his suspicions; he therefore, under the circumstances, was determined to have some other proof of the stranger's assertions, that his name was not only de Haro, but Leon de Haro; he therefore very calmly observed—

“Signor, excuse me if I delay you a moment from your supper. I am a most intimate friend of a Spanish signor named Leon de Haro. I have been days, nay, weeks, expecting him in Naples, and I can get no account of him; now——”

“Signor,” interrupted the stranger, with a most insinuating smile, “my supper is getting miserably cold, and I am remarkably hungry. I can well understand your feeling of disappointment. If you have not supped, and feel no dislike to a stranger's invitation, pray partake of my supper and a bottle or two of champagne, and I promise you I will answer all your questions afterwards to your satisfaction; and you will find I can be of service to your friend and my namesake;” and, touching the bell, the waiter was ordered to add to the supper, and bring more wine; and then, with the most easy and good-tempered manner, he placed a chair for our hero.

“Well, Signor,” said Vernon, with all the confidence and ease of youth, “I will not spoil your supper, but accept your invitation, though, I must confess, few, after undergoing so thorough a plundering as you have from this notorious and angelic robber, designating himself Fra Angelo——”

“Oh, I assure you,” said the stranger, skilfully separating a wing of the capon, and placing it, with its snow-white sauce, on Vernon's plate, “it's quite possible that the good people of Naples will canonize this worthy Fra Angelo upon his death.”

“Provided,” said Vernon, attacking the fowl with considerable gusto, “he does not make his exit from this world with a hempen cravat, which appears very probable.”

The stranger smiled, filled a bumper of champagne for himself and guest, saying—

“I really trust such will not be his mode of departure. I cannot help drinking his health after his extreme kindness and politeness to me,” and down went the sparkling liquor.

“You are very generous, Signor,” said Vernon, fixing his eyes upon the dark laughing orbs of the stranger, and drinking his champagne slowly.

The conversation then turned upon various subjects ; the stranger showing himself perfectly well acquainted with the several cities of Italy, and the society to be met in them.

After the supper had been removed, and a bottle of Burgundy ordered, Vernon broke the ice by saying—

“We will now resume the subject, Signor, we were on before your polite invitation to supper put a stop—”

“Permit me,” interrupted the stranger, “to give you the explanation you so much desire, in my own way.”

Vernon bowed.

“You have mentioned the name of Fra Angelo several times, since I have had the pleasure of your company, in a manner that leads me to suppose you regard him in the light of a common cut-purse.”

“Truly, Signor, you ought to be the very one most likely to agree with me in that respect ; but as you seem to ask a question, I most candidly say, angelic as this robber’s name sounds, I think it a foul disgrace to any government, that permits such a ruffian to trample upon the laws with such impunity.”

A dark shade flitted over the stranger’s face, but it was momentary ; Vernon remarked the expression, and continued—

“From what you have said, I am to imagine you know something concerning my friend De Haro—he may have fallen into the hands of this Bandit—I may mistake.”

“I am sorry to tell you, Signor,” interrupted the stranger, filling his glass, and holding it up between himself and the light, “that it is no mistake, for your friend

not only did fall in with Fra Angelo, but he actually remains at this moment a prisoner in his hands."

"This is vexatious," said Vernon seriously. "May I ask you, how you come to be so well informed of the fact?"

"Diavolo!" returned the stranger, "I came direct from the haunts of the band, in the mountains above Itri, and left the Signor de Haro there, I am rejoiced to say—alive and well."

"Alive and well," said our hero, in rather an angry tone, "in the power of a man who, in a moment of caprice, may cut his throat."

"No, Signor," said the stranger quietly, "you wrong Fra Angelo—he never cut a throat, or allowed any one else to do so in his band. The fact of the matter is, I have come to Naples, to negotiate his release, and, as you may now imagine, made use of his name for that purpose. You look surprised, and regard me I see with suspicion; but first allow me to say a few, a very few words, about this brigand, to whom the people of Itri, and its vicinity, have given the profane name of Fra Angelo."

"You are not, surely," said Vernon, with somewhat of a sneer on his handsome lip, "you are not surely going to defend the character and occupation of a man who sets all laws, human and divine, at defiance—a monstrous nuisance—a rallying point for every miscreant, who, outraging society, is forced to fly from the laws of his country."

"I grant," said the stranger, with a thoughtful expression of countenance, "that what you say is true; but you mistake it if you think I was going to defend him. Now listen to what I am going to say; some few years ago—four or five perhaps—there existed in the vicinity of this city, a most ferocious band of brigands—their leader, from his cruelty and brutality, and the atrocities he committed, acquired the name of Fra Diavolo. There was no crime too horrible for this villain to commit; and the government, weak and contemptible, was unable to crush him—he laughed at their efforts—and openly

defied them—carried many females off to the mountains, and levied contributions from towns and villages.* Now Signor,” continued the stranger, his face slightly flushing, “would you not say, that the man who rid society of such a pest and plague deserved some credit from his fellow men?”

“It was certainly a very praiseworthy act,” said Vernon, fixing his eyes upon his companion, scarcely knowing what to think of him, “but I suppose that honour, however, is due to the hangman of Naples?”

“No, Signor,” said the stranger, in a deep, stern tone, “such was not the fate of Fra Diavolo—he was shot.”

“Shot!” repeated Sidney Vernon, “and by whom?”

“I had the good fortune to perform that act,” said the stranger.

“You!” exclaimed our hero, in a tone of great surprise. “How did you escape after such an act?”

“I will tell you,” returned the exterminator of Fra Diavolo, “the consequences that followed the deed. The band selected another leader; this man, after an infinite deal of risk, and labour, completely reformed the troop—there were no more cruelties exercised—no women carried off—no blood shed, except in self-defence—the peasantry were protected from petty robbers—no person was ever carried off for ransom, unless it was clearly ascertained he was able to pay; in fact, in less than two years, this new leader acquired his profane name.”

“And pray, may I ask you,” demanded Vernon, in a very serious searching tone, “who you may be, who seem so well acquainted with this amiable robber?”

The stranger filled his glass, and fixed his dark eyes upon our hero, saying—

“Signor, Fra Angelo has at this moment the pleasure of drinking your health!”

Vernon sat perfectly still, gazing steadily into the features of the robber—who exhibited not the slightest perceptible emotion on his features.

* A fact.

"So, then," said our hero, calmly, "I have had the supreme felicity of supping and hob-nobbing champagne with the notorious Fra Angelo. I feel perfectly satisfied," seeing the redoubtable bandit lay down his empty glass with perfect composure, "that you have a powerful motive for venturing to make this discovery to me—otherwise, I should feel justified, and consider I was only doing my duty to society, by seizing your person."

"That would not be possible, Signor," returned the brigand, "without loss of life,"

As he spoke, he drew from a side pocket a brace of four-barrelled pistols, and laid them on the table, saying—

"Signor, I have sworn never to be taken alive. You could not have mastered me, strong and powerful as you are, without a deadly struggle. Had you stirred or made a sudden effort to seize me, much as it would have grieved and pained me, you were a dead man, and my own escape certain. Yonder window leads out on a balcony, from which there are steps leading into public gardens, open at all hours; ten minutes—aye five, would so disguise me, that I might defy even your recognition. I am a judge of physiognomy besides; when I first saw you, I recognised, by the Signor de Haro's description, that you must be his English friend; but I pray you, for his sake," and he replaced the pistols in his vest, "to hear me for a moment. Forget," he added, in a serious, even sad tone, "forget who I am, and imagine who I once was, a gentleman, by birth and education."

Vernon listened to the deep pleasing tones of the brigand's voice, without thinking of interrupting him; there was a gentlemanly easy dignity about this strange man that interested him; besides, he saw at once, that De Haro's liberty depended upon taking the revelation, so singularly made to him, quietly—at least, till he saw how matters would tend; but one thing he was resolved upon, he would be assured of his friend's safety and future liberty, before he would permit Fra Angelo to quit the room, notwithstanding his four-barrelled pistols.

"Signor," continued the brigand, "I determined from the very first to declare myself to you—for when you discovered I was not the Signor de Haro, and had his assumed name, I felt satisfied you would not quit this room without such explanation as I could not give."

"You are correct in that," said Vernon; "I would not have left without a satisfactory proof of your right to the name of De Haro; and the struggle between us would have been more equal than you suppose, for I am armed as well as yourself; but for certain reasons, I prefer a more quiet way of settling the matter; and, I must say, I feel grieved to see a man of your appearance and education, confessing to having once been a gentleman by birth, degrading himself by herding with miscreants who live by the plunder of their fellow creatures. But, like all men, who have adopted, or, perhaps, been forced into a more than dubious career, and who flatter themselves they can adduce arguments to support their deviation from the paths of rectitude, you are deceived. My friend's life, it seems, or his liberty, at all events, appears to depend upon you—I cannot, of course, understand it, but I will patiently listen to an explanation."

"Signor," said the brigand, with a voice which betrayed some emotion, "I feel deeply your kindness and patience, in consenting to hear me. I am not going to bring forward one word or argument in vindication of my unfortunate career. I merely wish to show how circumstances may influence a man's fate, notwithstanding his own efforts to counteract them. Neither do I intend to disgust you with any details of a robber's life. What I have to say has no reference to a such career; briefly then I will state the causes and events that have forced me to become what I am."

We reserve for the next chapter the brigand's narrative.

CHAPTER XX.

"By birth I am a Spaniard ; my family name you will excuse my mentioning. I became my own master at two and twenty, and possessor of an old and valuable estate, yielding a very handsome competence. Soon after entering into possession, I quitted my native province, and proceeded to pass some time in the then gay and dissipated city of Madrid.

"I am persuaded that, at this period, neither my nature or disposition prompted to vice ; with proper guidance, my career might have been widely different ; as it was, left entirely to my own discretion, and naturally eager for pleasure, I very soon found evil acquaintances, and plunged with them into all the follies and vices of which Madrid was the focus. Still, my family name and fortune permitted my entrance into the first society. Play was tolerated in the highest classes, and carried to a fearful pitch ; fortunes were made and lost in a night. Once tempted to gamble, I became passionately devoted to it, and fortune invariably sided with me.

"At this period, a very remarkable person was playing a conspicuous part, not only in Madrid, but in all the large cities and towns in Spain. This person was Don Miguel De Los Morez, the only son of the Inquisitor-General of Spain. This man was the cause of all my misfortunes, and owed his miserable and untimely end to me, through a most singular accident.

"Don Miguel De Los Morez possessed a handsome person, but a disposition most brutally depraved ; in fact, he was notorious throughout Spain for his vices and crimes ; and though only seven and twenty, he gloried in the reputation he had so well established. His father, narrow-minded, bigotted, and cruel, was the terror of those who professed to be good Catholics.

"Don Miguel was a noted gambler, and considered so fortunate, that no one would venture to contend with

him ; more indeed through fear of his brutal and ungovernable temper, than his good fortune. I had resided in Madrid something more than a year, when Don Miguel returned to that city, after spending some time in the provinces. One night I was engaged with some young hidalgos at play, in one of the great gambling establishments, when Don Miguel entered the principal saloon, with two or three of his greatest friends, or rather sycophants ; they were all heated with wine, especially Don Miguel ; and many gentlemen present, knowing his brutal temper when intoxicated, one by one left the saloon.

"It was after supper, and the wine and refreshments were still on the side tables ; I was particularly fortunate that night, and was perhaps a little excited, having drank more than was usual with me. I was playing alternately with cards and dice, with an officer of the 54th regiment, then quartered in Madrid. Don Miguel and two of his friends approached the table, and stood a short time silently observing us ; my antagonist lost, and paid his stake, saying—

"‘Don Ferran D——, you are fortune’s favourite,’" and left the room.

"I was rising to retire, when, Don Miguel said, with a sneer—

"‘Are you afraid, Don ——, or too wise to risk your fame for good luck with an antagonist equally favoured by the blind goddess ?’

"‘There are few things, Don Miguel,’ I replied, ‘that I fear ; and playing a game with you is certainly not one of them.’

"‘I will take you at your word,’ returned Don Miguel, ‘and try you at the same game you have just been so fortunate at.’

"As we began to play there were a few hidalgos still remaining in the saloon, but they kept aloof from us. Don Miguel’s oaths, every time he lost, were certainly sufficient to startle any sober man ; I kept my temper, however. At last, cursing the cards, he defied me at dice ; he still lost, he was choking with rage, and suddenly, in

a violent transport of passion, he seized both cards and dice, and with a fearful imprecation, hurled them in my face, calling me an infamous sharper.

"Indignant and enraged, I seized a flask near me, and dashed it in his face; he threw himself violently on one side, bending his head sideways to avoid the bottle, which missed him; when, with a wild cry, he sprung from his seat, staggered, and fell forward on the table, a deluge of blood flowing from his neck. I saw at once the cause of this strange and sudden catastrophe. Don Miguel's friend was standing directly behind him; he had taken up a long sharp-pointed knife, and was cutting and scraping one of the dice; he paused as he beheld me resenting Don Miguel's insult, and happened to have the knife extended, with the point towards his friend; the sudden and violent jerk back brought Don Miguel's neck direct upon the knife, with such force that the jugular vein was separated. The moment the accident occurred, those in the saloon fled in terror. Even Don Miguel's friend dropped the knife stained with his blood, and fled; leaving me alone with the dying man. No power of man could save him, he was even dead while I gazed, stupified with terror, upon him. Recovering my scattered senses, I also rushed from the saloon; I had not a moment to lose, for I knew I was a doomed man, though perfectly innocent.

"I ran to my lodgings, secured all the valuables I possessed in the way of money and jewels; a faithful servant I had aided me, we packed them up, saddled our horses, and left Madrid at a rapid pace."

"Pardon me," said Vernon, interrupting Fra Angelo, "but it appears strange to me that you should fly, and thus, in a manner, lead people to suppose you were guilty, when several present must have known you were innocent."

"Ah, Signor," returned the brigand, with a smile, "you are an enlightened Englishman—justice can be obtained in your courts of law* but I knew it would be

* Our worthy friend Fra Angelo, it's very clear, never tried our

madness to stand a trial; there is no such thing, Signor, as justice in Spain, when your accuser is the Inquisitor-General. Not one of those present at the gaming-table would have come forward; furious and maddened at the loss of his son, I should have been seized—first tortured till I either sunk under the infliction, or told a lie—in either case the residue of my life would have been spent in a dungeon of the Inquisition.

“I retired to my estate, in the province of Andalusia, and remained concealed—waiting to hear how the death of Don Miguel would be taken. It proved that I was right in flying; the very man who caused the accident, by holding the knife that entered his friend’s neck, actually came forward, and swore to the father that I had seized the knife from the table, and, in a fit of passion, stabbed Don Miguel. I was now destined to feel the vengeance of the most powerful subject of the King of Spain. Every soul in the saloon, along with the master of the gaming-house, were arrested, and they all—for they knew well enough, though only one or two witnessed the accident, that the Inquisitor General must have vengeance—they all swore that Don Miguel was slain by my hand; one only, for an instant, attempted to plead ignorance, and that was the owner of the establishment, who really was not in the room. He was put to the torture, and at the second wrench of that hateful and vile instrument of tyrants and fools, he not only swore that I murdered Don Miguel, but that I had attempted to murder himself.

“I was hunted through Spain; my property confiscated, and a large reward offered for my apprehension. I do not wish to weary you with details on any but the principal events of my early career, therefore I will hurry on. I contrived to escape out of Spain, stripped of my possessions, and my name stigmatized as a murderer. I reached the coast of Italy with whatever

law courts with an empty purse, or, perhaps he would have altered his opinion of them.

money and jewels I could collect, and visited most of the principal cities. Always fortunate in play, and thus living, I may say—and deeply I deplore it—by the same vice that brought ruin and disgrace upon me.

“I passed the winter in Florence, and entered into the first society there. It was not necessary in Italy to enter gaming-establishments to indulge in play—for that baneful vice was too much and passionately loved by the Italians, not to meet it in every mansion you frequented. In Venice I beheld patricians in their robes of magistracy presiding even at public gaming-tables, and there I had particularly good fortune, and amassed a very large sum.

“In Florence I became acquainted with the only daughter of Count L——, and soon formed a passionate attachment for her. My love was returned, and I have no doubt in time I should have gained the consent of her parents. I began to abandon play, and thought of entering into the Grand Duke’s service; and so changed did I become by my attachment to the amiable daughter of Count L——, that I began to look upon cards and dice with abhorrence; besides, I did not despair of yet recovering my confiscated property, and clearing my fame.

“I corresponded with one faithful friend, who had married well, and was in a high situation under the Spanish ministers; he wrote me word that he had no doubt, if the Inquisitor General died—and he was a very old man—that money would purchase the truth from two or three of the persons who were present at the time of the accident; but to attempt anything of the kind during the life-time of the Grand Inquisitor, would be madness.

“Things were in this state when a Spanish nobleman and his family arrived in Florence. Unfortunately, I was not aware of their arrival till too late to avoid a rencontre. At a grand public ball to the nobility and strangers of distinction, as I was walking through the rooms, I suddenly came face to face with the son of the

Conde de Lerme—the very officer with whom I was playing before I became the antagonist of Don Miguel. He was a proud and haughty youth at all times, and I had won a tolerably large sum from him on that fatal evening. He recognised me at once, turned away, and ere four hours had expired, I was known throughout all the society of Florence, as the murderer of Don Miguel. The consequence was that I was shunned, and the mansion of the Count de L— — was closed against me.

“Exasperated by this treatment, I forced the young Spaniard, who had propagated intelligence he must have known to be false, to give me a meeting, or declare the truth. He retorted by saying he considered me to have slain Don Miguel, therefore he would not retract his words; but he would condescend to meet me. The sword was selected, and at the fourth or fifth pass, I ran him through the body,—thank God, however, he did not die, though he was several weeks recovering from the wound.

“Though shunned and avoided, woman’s love and faith never wavered; I contrived to see the Count’s daughter, and pledge my soul as to the falsehood of the accusation, and showed her my friend’s letters from Madrid, which completely convinced her that I was vilified; but as the dear girl threw her arms round my neck in a passion of tears, she exclaimed—‘Oh, Ferran, Ferran, abjure for ever that fearful vice.’ On my knees I vowed to her never again to play—I have kept that vow. Camilla De L— took the letters to her father, that she might clear me from this foul accusation. The Count told his daughter it was very possible; but still, with such an accusation hanging over me—and, at all events, ruined in position—it were madness to sacrifice his daughter by permitting such an alliance.

“Why need I prolong my narrative? for a few words more will explain how I became the miserable wretch I am. Camilla fled with me from Florence—we were married, at Heima—and though we humbly implored the Count’s forgiveness, he was inexorable, and cast off

his daughter for ever. I forwarded a letter I had received from Madrid, stating that the Inquisitor General was on the point of death, and that my friend Don Lopez Guartré, was appointed king's counsellor, and that the moment the Inquisitor ceased to exist, Don Lopez would attempt my vindication; but all in vain.

"After remaining two happy years in Sienna, and hearing no news of the Inquisitor's death, I received a letter from a distant relation attached to the Spanish embassy in Naples, advising me to proceed to that city, as he could procure me a commission in a new regiment raising by order of King Ferdinand. I was delighted at this proposal, for my funds were rapidly diminishing, and I had now two children, one only a few weeks old. I immediately started for Rome; the conveyance was stopped by Fra Diavolo and his band. In the carriage were two officers of the 9th regiment—we fatally attempted resistance. One of the officers was shot, and, in the scuffle, I fired and shot Fra Diavolo through the head, and the instant after was knocked senseless by a blow from the butt-end of a heavy carbine.

"When I recovered I found myself lying, fast bound, in a small hut, with my wife and children hanging over me, the youngest nearly dead from a fall; my beloved wife was in an agony of tears. I had been so long insensible that she feared I should never recover. From her I learned that we were in the mountain retreat of the brigands. Fortunately for me, my very act of killing their leader saved my life, for so notoriously cruel and ferocious had this man, or demon, become, that his own men actually trembled in his presence; when inspired by passion or drink, he would shoot the first of his band that spoke to him.

"These men came to the strange resolution of making me their leader, and gave me eight hours to choose whether another leader should be elected—to whom my wife would at once, according to their rules and customs, belong—or, I should accept the post and take the oaths. Need I dwell on this terrible and fearful struggle, worse,

ten thousand times worse than the cruellest death. If my death would have released my adored wife, I would have stood up before their carbines and welcomed it with joy; but even those fierce men were moved on witnessing my agonies; they gave me one solitary ray of hope to cheer me—if we took the oaths, my wife and children might reside at the town of D—, which is within three or four leagues of Itri. On this condition I consented. We both took the solemn, fearful oaths the brigands required, and, strange to say, these lawless and ferocious men allowed my wife and myself and youngest child to depart and seek a habitation in D—, keeping my little girl as a hostage for our return. I fixed my heart-broken Camilla in a pretty cottage on the outside of the town, and then returned to the mountains, where I was duly nominated their chief. My oaths bind me from saying one word more relative to the troop. The power I gained appeared almost incomprehensible, though easily explained; with the brigands my appearance was so different that no human being could recognize me; whilst in my own name and natural appearance I visited towns and cities with impunity, gained important intelligence, and always managed to avoid bloodshed. Finding they grew richer and ran less risk, the men became much less ferocious, and much easier managed, and thanks to an imbecile government, and a people utterly callous and effeminate, and sunk in vice and profligacy, our bands have flourished with impunity. I have now, signor, related sufficient of my life to prove to you that, to a certain extent, I was unable to avoid my miserable destiny.”

“And yet,” said Sidney Vernon, seeing the Spaniard pause and look somewhat sadly in his face, “and yet all your misfortunes arose from your fatal infatuation for play. By birth a gentleman, possessing an independent fortune, you had no excuse whatever for frequenting so infamous a place as a notorious gaming-house. You had nothing to gain, but every thing to lose—even honour and reputation. No matter how correct your principles

of gaming might be, they were forfeited at the outset. A desperate wretch, with starvation staring him in the face, might make a miserable excuse for staking his last crown, but you had none; there are many paths to pleasure without following that fatal and debasing one of play. It is certainly true, that you could not sacrifice your unfortunate wife to so fearful a fate; to me, it appears that I should act the same; but whether oaths extorted by such men, and for such purposes, are binding in the eyes of Heaven I am at a loss to say—I think not. I feel a sincere pity and regret for your fearful situation, but a thousand-fold more so for her who has to endure her own woe, and pine over your faults and her children's future fate. You may be shot—or, as an atonement to the offended laws of society, meet——”

“Hold, signor, I beseech you,” said the brigand, his handsome features betraying deep emotion, “paint not such a picture of my ultimate destiny. I have one ray of hope, the light of which begins to pierce the darkness that for six years has enveloped me, that cheers me even now; I trust I shall yet live to bury in oblivion the name of Fra Angelo, and regain the one I have lost. But no more of myself. Let me now speak of your friend, the Signor Leon de Haro. I was staying for certain purposes at the head locanda at ——. Your friend arrived, and remained the night. We supped together, for I was there under my own name; being both Spaniards, we easily became acquainted; when he heard my name he started.

“‘Good heavens!’ said he, ‘you are then Don Ferran de ——, who was supposed to have slain Don Miguel.’

“‘The same unfortunate man, Signor de Haro; but how comes it you say supposed?’

“‘Simply,’ returned your friend, ‘because I know you are innocent.’

“I started and changed colour.

“‘Then you are ignorant,’ said the Signor de Haro, ‘of what has taken place within these last few months?’

“‘Quite,’ I replied, ‘except indeed that the Inquisitor

General is dead, and that the king refused to listen to any vindication of the affair, till I surrendered myself.'

" 'Santos Dios! and why do you not do so. Do you not know that Don Juan de Villaforde, the Biscayan friend of Don Miguel, was arrested for treason, and that he wrote a full confession before he suffered death. In this confession he fully stated on oath, that he himself was the accidental slayer of Don Miguel, by a knife he had in his hand entering Don Miguel's neck. This account,' continued the Signor de Haro, 'was published in the *Madrid Gazette*—I read it myself.'

"I turned so pale with the agony of thought that this unexpected intelligence imparted to me, that the Signor de Haro thought I was taken ill; however, I passed it off, and said I should certainly take the earliest opportunity of returning to Spain. The Signor de Haro then mentioned that he was travelling to Naples, to meet an English senor, who had rendered him an essential service, and so accurately described you, that the moment you entered this saloon I knew you to be this English friend, and the knowledge of your character, gained from De Haro, determined me to reveal myself to you. When I parted from the Signor de Haro, I said to him laughing, at the same time giving him a folded paper—'You are going to Naples, I am going to Sienna, so this is now of no use to me; I bought it from an old woman at Itri—if you meet any brigands on your road give them that, it will save your being plundered.' Your friend laughed heartily, thinking I was joking, saying:

" 'I'm afraid old women's charms will have small effect upon a Roman or Neapolitan bandit.' Unfortunately he lost my countersign, which would have saved him; for when I returned, a week afterwards, I found him detained a prisoner for ransom, in our mountain retreat.

"His amazement when I discovered myself to him, and related my sad misfortunes, was indeed great. Besides the Signor de Haro, I found a countryman of yours, the servant of an English officer, who had left him as pledge for his paying a certain ransom, which has not been paid;

he is a powerful, athletic, and handsome fellow, about four or five-and-twenty. In the times of Fra Diavolo, the poor fellow's throat would have been cut, according to the then rules of the band—I shall set him at liberty, along with the Signor de Haro; and if you want a true-hearted, honest attendant, led me recommend him. I fancy I understand physiognomy, and I am sure Patrick O'—, (the rest of the name is perfectly unpronounceable,) will serve you faithfully. However, my business is now concerning your friend; according to our rules I could not release him, without ransom, and since the affair of Patrick's master, the band are resolved never to let a prisoner be set free to seek the means of paying the sum demanded. Your friend had in his desk an order on a Neapolitan bank, for a large sum, payable only to himself. Having fixed upon the ransom, making it as light as I could, it was agreed that I should go for it myself; for being a Spaniard, I could personate the Signor de Haro, without much fear of discovery. It appears, however, that the very plan I adopted, of stating at the locando that I had been plundered by Fra Angelo, led to our meeting; I arrived too late to-day for the bank, so waited for to-morrow; and now, Signor, you know my secret—I am in your power. True to my men and my oaths I will be, if it costs me my life."

"I require no time," said our hero, "to ponder over the line of conduct I think it right to follow. I place implicit faith in your narrative, and will, without hesitation, permit you to follow out your plan; at the same time, deeply and sincerely deploring the fatality that condemns a gentleman, by birth and education, to the association and contamination of such men as you must mingle with. There is one thing, however, I must have your promise of fulfilling. If by any chance you fail in obtaining the money at the bankers, that you will nevertheless liberate my friend."

"Most certainly," replied Fra Angelo, "such was our agreement before I left the mountains—if I failed to return or was taken, after the expiration of ten days,

your friend was to be liberated ; and as my men depend on me, so can I implicitly rely on their faith."

Vernon rose to leave ; Fra Angelo looked dejected ; and our hero, who really pitied the unfortunate Spaniard, held out his hand, saying—

"Farewell, Don Ferran—I give you my hand frankly, and with a true feeling of pity for your misfortunes—trusting that some circumstance may shortly occur to change your destiny, and release your poor lady from a life of sorrow and shame. Farewell!"

Fra Angelo took the hand offered, with a flushed cheek, saying—

"The clasp of this hand shall never be forgotten ; nor the memory of this hour. Farewell, brave and generous Englishman. I know not why, or what it is that prompts me to look into the future—but I am sure we shall meet again ; the time is coming, when the fearful trial I endure will end—there may yet be a field for the degraded Don Ferran, in which to wash off this foul slur on a noble name. Adieu." And wringing the Englishman's hand with a firm pressure, they parted. Sidney Vernon retired to his hotel, leaving, seated in the saloon of the Black Eagle, a man, for whose apprehension his Neapolitan Majesty would willingly have given ten thousand crowns *

* To such an extraordinary pitch of audacity did the brigands of the Campagna of Rome arrive, that the king of Naples was forced to treat with them. In 1818, Cardinal Gonsalvo sent the bishop of Terracina, to meet their chief (not Fra Angelo) and offer them terms ; the terms finally agreed to, were : that they were to go to prison for six months, then to be pardoned, and to receive an appointment under government, of twenty-five crowns a month.

CHAPTER XXI.

For several hours of the night, Sidney Vernon lay without the power of closing his eyes in sleep, so troubled, confused, and entangled were his thoughts; and when towards morning he fell into a slumber, his dreams were even more singularly and absurdly jumbled together, strange visions floating through his brain.

At one time, he fancied the Marchese de Lori, with a wooden leg, pointed like a stiletto, was chasing the fair Julia Gerlotti, while he himself was busy trying to catch the assassin Goldoni, who with a blunderbuss, like an eighteen pounder, was endeavouring to get a shot at him. When just on the point of being impaled on the point of the Marchese's wooden leg, Fra Angelo rushed to his assistance, but was held back by a rope looped round his neck, fastened to something he could not make out; and just as he thought he was sure of rescuing Julia, the hideous, pug-nosed duenna threw her arms round his neck, smothering him with kisses, and screaming—

“Now you are mine—mine for ever.”

This last part of his vision was, however, too much for our hero; with a desperate effort he roused himself from his night-mare, and sprang from his couch, verily believing he was still held by the duenna, and thinking himself remarkably fortunate on finding it only a dream.

Anxious to know how Fra Angelo fared at the Neapolitan banker's, during the latter part of the day he called there, and on being introduced into the private apartment of the banker, who was an extremely pleasant, facetious, fat, merry-looking individual, very unlike a Neapolitan, he inquired whether a Spanish gentleman of the name of De Haro had called in the morning.

"Three hours ago, signor," said the banker; "he had a letter of credit upon our house. A remarkably handsome and pleasant gentleman," continued Signor Petunio, rubbing his hands, "speaks the Italian like a native—told me all about his fortunate escape from our notorious road surveyor, Fra Angelo, who treated him extremely well. It is true, he seized all his baggage, but took his word for a large sum for his ransom, and restored him his letter of credit. I was very anxious to know what kind of man this Fra Angelo really is, as every-body describes him so differently, and the Signor De Haro is fond of a joke, I suppose—ha! ha! ha! he made me laugh—for he said, repeating my question—

"What is he like? Just look at me, Signor Petunio—it is very singular and rather unfortunate—but this Fra Angelo is as like me in height, face, and appearance as a twin brother.'

"I laughed heartily—for I guessed that the Signor de Haro was joking me; and, by St. Nicholas! he has a right to one about Fra Angelo—for he paid high for his amusement; though, to be sure, the worthy brigand might have demanded the whole of the sum in his letter of credit instead of only half."

"Extremely conscientious," remarked Sidney Vernon, seriously.

"Very," returned the banker; "his predecessor, Fra Diavolo, would have cut his throat, or had the whole. I was so pleased with the Signor de Haro, who intends spending some time in our city, that I invited him to meet the Prince of Capri and some friends of mine next week, at my villa, at Terra Nova; and he promised to accept my invitation—saying, in his droll way—

"Oh, I will come, Signor Petunio—I will come—but I'm afraid after my first visit you will not send me another invitation.'

"Ha! ha! ha! how droll! I suppose he thinks his appetite will cause a famine. I assure you, I shall be delighted to see your facetious, lively friend, and trust, Signor Vernon, you will accompany him."

Vernon bowed—returned the banker many thanks for his politeness, but observed, he was much afraid his friend De Haro's jokes would be found very serious ones; and wishing the rather surprised Signor Petunio a good evening, he returned to his hotel.

In a few days, the Signor de Haro arrived safe and sound and in excellent spirits, and looking uncommonly well.

"By Jove! Leon," exclaimed our hero, "if you have paid dear for your board and lodging, your fare must have been good."

"I lived on the fat of the land, Sid—and, between ourselves, be it said, I had a right pleasant time of it. Capital shooting on the hills—I had this countryman of yours for an attendant, a splendid fowling piece, and a brace of dogs—the weather was fine, and the game plentiful—but I will tell you all about it presently. By the way, as you will want a personal attendant, let me recommend the one I had in the mountains, as kind-hearted and clever a fellow as you would meet in a year's search, though we had some trouble in understanding one another; his mixture of French and Italian being none of the best—and my knowledge of English consisting of about a dozen words."

"I was thinking of engaging some sort of attendant; and should certainly prefer a countryman; though I suspect this man, with the unpronounceable name, is an Irishman, by his cognomen of Patrick."

Patrick O'Shaughnessy, for that was the name of Leon de Haro's temporary attendant, soon made his appearance, and greatly attracted our hero by his honest, pleasing countenance, and fine athletic figure. He was not more than four and twenty; he had begun life as a soldier in a dragoon regiment—served four years—and then being badly wounded—he remained as servant with the major of the same regiment, who had also been wounded, until he retired on half pay, procuring Patrick's discharge. They then travelled on the continent for two years, when the major and himself fell into the hands of Fra Angelo.

Sidney was much pleased with the man, who seemed equally delighted with the powerful figure of his new master—for he at once engaged him—stating, however, that he was going very shortly to embark for Spain, and should very probably take service in the army of the king.

It was all one to Patrick O'Shaughnessy where he went—for he loved the army, and had no objection to fight in any shape—in a fair open way—and all countries were alike to him—so the matter was easily settled between master and man.

That night the friends passed in recapitulating the events that had occurred during their absence from each other. Sidney Vernon made De Haro acquainted with Gerlotti's and his own adventures, and the mistake he had made in running off with the pug-nosed duenna, which greatly amused the Spaniard. He did not, however, state any of the particulars relative to the birth of Sir Christopher Vernon's son and heir, as nothing being positively known, it was a delicate subject to touch upon.

The two friends agreed to sail for the nearest port to the province of Andalusia that they could find a vessel bound for.

About a fortnight after De Haro's arrival in Naples, he and his friend left for Cadiz, having succeeded in procuring a passage in a Spanish felucca, bound from Naples to that port.

Our hero lost no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Spanish language, and with Leon's help, he made rapid progress. Every day the friends became more attached to each other; Leon loved the young Englishman as a brother, and felt proud at the prospect of introducing so distinguished a looking companion to his father and the rest of the family.

Cadiz was, at this period, the focus of nearly all the distinguished patriots; the streets of the city were thronged, and at every corner, a group of anxious faces might be observed, whilst a sense of deep hatred to the French seemed to be the universal feeling of every Spaniard.

Leon was so extremely anxious to reach home, that he induced his friend to give up his intention of proceeding first to Lisbon, to which place his letters had been ordered, and acting on Leon's recommendation, he wrote to the bankers at Lisbon, requesting them to forward his letters to the firm of —— at Cordova.

They started for Seville by the only public conveyance which at that period traversed the roads of Spain, but finding this tedious and very disagreeable, they procured horses at Seville, and continued their journey much more pleasantly to Cordova.

The sun was near setting, on the evening they reached the summit of the hill that overlooks the plain, in which is situated the Moorish city of Cordova. It was not exactly the period of the year for admiring scenery, being the latter end of February, but the weather was unusually mild, and the beautiful province of Andalusia was not to be traversed, even in the depth of winter, without exciting admiration; everything, even the manners and appearance of the peasantry in this famed province, differed from the other parts of Spain.

"Is not this a glorious and splendid prospect?" asked Leon with enthusiasm, checking his steed, "is not Cordova built in the midst of an earthy paradise? look, how silvery and smoothly the noble Guadalquivir glides beneath its walls, and then, turning aside, winds through yon verdant and smiling plain, as if loth to quit the soil that has made its name so renowned in song."

"It is indeed a lovely scene, and no one can wonder at the despair the unfortunate Moors felt, when expelled and driven from this, their favourite and much loved home."

"They called it the garden of Spain, and well they might, for the old walls of the city enclosed extensive gardens and orchards; groves of orange and citron lined the banks of Guadalquivir; while, from amid the thick clusters of trees, innumerable spires and towers of convents and churches, everywhere met the sight. But let us on; we will sleep to-night at Cordova, though the

Castle De Haro is only about a league and a half the other side of the city."

On reaching the hostel of the Duke of Braganza, in the Plaza Major, Leon found that his father had sent a groom and horses to await their arrival. Vernon wishing to ascertain whether any letters had arrived, urged Leon to go on, expressing a desire to stay in Cordova till the next day; in fact, not liking to interrupt the family intercourse on their first meeting.

De Haro, therefore, after recommending his friend to the peculiar care of the worthy Gomez Toraldos, the landlord, set off, promising to be back the next day early.

Vernon sent Patrick to inquire for letters, but was disappointed to find that none had arrived from Lisbon.

The following morning Leon returned in high spirits.

"My dear father nearly banished me his presence, Sid, for leaving you behind last night. By Santiago! the mansion is half full of guests; but I will tell you all about them as we ride along. Did you get your letters?"

"No, I did not; your posts are none of the fastest."

"No, by the Cid, they are not," returned the young Spaniard, laughing, "there is nothing very fast in this country, except our horses, and so you will say before this time to-morrow. So mount, and as we go, I will tell you all kinds of news."

After leaving the city, they continued by the side of the Guadalquivir.

"First of all, I must tell you," said Leon, "my dear father has obtained you a lieutenancy in my regiment, and we have two months leave; these two months will make a Spaniard of you. The regiment is at Madrid, so you see the condé has lost no time in getting his majesty a stout soldier."

Vernon felt the kind and generous conduct of the condé, and expressed to his friend, how flattered he was by such an immediate attention to his wishes.

"Do not think the obligation is on your side, Sidney;

I can tell you the time is coming when Spain will want a good sword wielded with heart and soul in her cause. Now listen, while I give you a family picture; there is nothing like knowing something of people you are to become domesticated with, beforehand.

"I will begin with my dear, kind-hearted old father; he is the head of one of the oldest families in Spain, and is justly proud of an ancient and untainted name; still you will neither find him a vain or a proud man, neither will you see in him the stately, cold formality of the Spanish Grandee. He lives somewhat in the old style, that is to say, he maintains just three times as many idle domestics as his mansion and state requires, and yet not to the extent of others of our nobility, who probably do not discharge a domestic in fifty years, if they live so long, but pension them and permit them to idle about their palaces and castles. My father is much beloved by all the surrounding peasantry, and with reason, for he is more than benefactor to his numerous dependants. One weakness, however, he has; if he makes up his mind, and determines on a thing, it must be done, no matter if, even in his own mind, he secretly acknowledges that he is wrong; this obstinacy has already caused some unhappiness in our family, especially in the case of my darling sister Ina, poor, dear girl, who is formed to be an ornament to society; loving the world, she is yet devoted, vowed to an unnatural seclusion. In many things you will have seen I am not exactly a Spaniard; like yourself, I abhor our national custom of condemning younger children of both sexes to the church; but this is to me a most painful and unhappy subject.

"My mother has been a kind and affectionate parent to me; but in thoughts, actions, and opinions, she is a true Spanish dame."

"My brother, Don Garcias Odina De Haro is as good-hearted and noble-minded a being as ever existed, but a most marvellously indolent man. I do verily believe if he were told the castle was on fire, he would not stir one inch, till his valet came to assist him to dress.

"Next on my list comes a very important personage indeed, in a Spanish nobleman's family. Our father Confessor, Padre Ignatius; I say ours, though I must tell you he has not the care of my soul upon his hands. He and my mother are kindred souls, both being most anxious in the cause of holy mother church.

"I am no favourite with the Padre, who almost considers me a lost sheep from the fold. He is seldom seen by any of the strangers that visit the castle, having a couple of apartments to himself, and is greatly given to studious pursuits. I dare say, Sid, you picture to yourself, a tall, gaunt, spare, sombre-looking individual, but such is not the case, the Padre being short and fat, with certainly the most penetrating eyes I almost ever saw.

"Now for the visitors at present from the castle: there is the Countess De Palafoix, a widow, forty years of age, still a remarkably handsome woman, and perfectly aware of the fact; she is very proud, tolerably good-natured, extremely agreeable, and very anxious to get her youngest daughter well married, for I must tell you the eldest is Garcias' intended, and they are to be married the first fine morning he can contrive to shake off his indolence, and find energy enough to go through the ceremony; and now, Sidney, I give you warning; take care of your heart, Isabella Palafoix is one of the handsomest girls in Andalusia, most fascinating in manner. She is to be wooed and won, and by Santiago she is worth the trial, for she has beauty, amiability, and a fine fortune. There are also two Hidalgos from Murcia, friends of Garcias'; and thus you have our family party indifferently described; and I have just brought my sketch to an end in time, for there, before you, is Castle De Haro."

"During the second harvest the view from this very spot is well worth seeing; that broad, noble sweep of the Guadalquivir, is covered with boats; all labour ceases before sunset, and then begins feasting, dancing and singing; all is mirth and gaiety; there is scarcely an Andalusian peasant that is not a musician, the possessor

of a guitar and a pair of castanets ; and I need not tell you, for you have a sharp eye, Sid, that our Andalusian maidens are unrivalled for their graceful dancing, and the smallness of their feet and ankles."

"By Jove, Leon," said Vernon, with a gay laugh, "you have enticed me into a dangerous net, out of which I fear it will be difficult to get, without some desperate entanglement."

"Ah, Sid, you are safe enough for two or three years at least. You may be scorched, but not seriously burned. But what think you of the Castle—Castle only in name?"

They were now near enough to obtain a clear view of the noble mansion of the de Haros—a' very extensive building, but not at all of a castellated form in any part ; it had several wings, and a noble colonnade, supported by white marble pillars, along the entire point. The castle stood in the midst of an extensive cork wood, with long vistas opening upon the waters of the Guadalquivir. Extensive gardens surrounded the mansion, well and tastefully laid out. The roof of the mansion, after the Moorish fashion, was flat, with a handsome balustrade along the front and sides.

Sidney remarked—as they rode round the mansion, followed by Patrick, who had greatly pleased both the friends by his attention, and quickness during the journey—the numerous domestics that thronged the great court-yard at the back of the mansion, for the young men had arranged to alight and seek the apartments prepared for them, before our hero's introduction to the Conde and family.

Under Leon's guidance, Sidney Vernon reached the suite of three chambers prepared for his special accommodation ; from the window, through a vista of gigantic cork trees, a charming view of the great bend of the Guadalquivir and the distant hills was obtained. Having changed his attire, Leon led the way to the saloon, where the Conde and Condessa were waiting to receive their son's guest ; the rest of the family and visitors

were out riding through the forest, witnessing the entrapping of game abounding in that district.

The Conde was more than kind in his welcome of our hero; he spoke of his obligation to him in saving his son's life in such terms of gratitude and affection, as at once to raise in our hero's heart a feeling of affection. The Condessa's reception was polite but rather constrained: about fifty-two years of age, she was still handsome. The Condessa, after joining in the conversation for a few minutes, retired, leaving the Conde and the young men entertaining him with a full account of their adventures. He enjoyed amazingly Vernon's account of his interview with Fra Angelo.

"I will tell you," said the Conde, "who this certainly ill-used young man is, and I deplore, exceedingly, the fate he has brought on himself, and out of which, I do not see how he can extricate himself—he is to be pitied. He comes of a very old Andalusian family. Don Juan de Lazaro, his father, served his country well, and died highly respected, leaving an only son, young Ferran de Lazaro.

"Excepting his passion for play, I never heard anything against the character of Lazaro—and the truth of the way in which Don Miguel was slain is now notoriously public. So that had not he been, to a certain degree, forced to adopt the disgraceful career he has, his pardon would no doubt be accorded—I should, at all events, exert my interest in his favour, for I knew his family well; his mother was a celebrated beauty, but of humble origin; that is, according to the Spanish notions of rank, being only the daughter of a very wealthy vine-grower."

"I trust he may yet extricate himself from those ruffians," said Sidney Vernon, "for he certainly is no common man, and in these times, might yet distinguish himself honourably; as his strange story is only confined to ourselves, his brigand career might never be known."

"You are right, my dear young friend," said the Conde, in a serious tone, "these are strange times for

Spain. There is no doubt whatever of the designs of that arch usurper Napoleon; Spaniards must either free themselves, or become slaves to a foreign ruler."

In the evening the rest of the family and visitors were introduced to the English guest, and all were struck with his noble and prepossessing appearance, and agreeable manners and conversation.

Our hero, on his part, was greatly pleased with the beautiful and fascinating Isabella Palafoix. She was tall, but easy and graceful in manner; her complexion, though that of a brunette, was singularly clear and transparent, with intensely dark eyes, long lashes, and jet black hair; altogether, Sidney Vernon inwardly confessed that Leon was right—she was a dangerous companion.

Leon's brother was some six years older than our hero; his manners and appearance were singularly indolent and inert; even his handsome intended, who neither wanted spirit nor intelligence, failed to rouse him from the dreamy species of repose in which he so frequently indulged; and yet, when excited—which a chance circumstance sometimes caused—his whole manner and appearance became changed in a moment. The Countess de Palafoix looked nearly as young as her eldest daughter, and evidently expected as much attention and as much flattery as either of them.

The evening passed in music and conversation; and Sidney Vernon, when he retired to rest, thought that, for a poor soldier of fortune, he had got into very dangerous quarters.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE month of March opened extremely fine, and parties were formed almost every day to the many Moorish

remains of palaces and castles that so abound in the province of Andalusia.

Three weeks had passed under the hospitable roof of the De Haros, and our hero confessed those weeks were bright ones—they were the sunshine of life; but the shadows were to come, mingled, it is true, with the lighter clouds that soften, but do not obscure the brighter tints.

During that short period he made rapid progress in his Spanish, ably assisted by the beautiful Isabella Palafoix, who took infinite pains to make a Spaniard of the handsome Englishman—in doing which she was running more risk than she herself was aware of. Whether she hoped to gain our hero's heart or not, time will tell; but his time was not yet come.

He had received letters from Lisbon, but only from his uncle's solicitor, Mr. Boodle, who informed him that the entire amount due to him of his father's assets, after all expenses, &c. were deducted, amounted to the sum of five thousand four hundred and eighty pounds, which sum was lodged in the Lisbon banker's hands—his acknowledgment to them would be sufficient. There was not a word beside business in the letter; but there was not a line from the Tressidders, which surprised him, and a degree of gloom he could not well account for hung over him all that day; he did not return from Cordova till late in the evening, and retired to his room without joining the guests—a large party that day, for all but the Palafoix were to leave the following morning.

Leon came to sit half an hour with his friend before he retired to rest. Vernon informed him of the letter he had received. At this period, he had become thoroughly acquainted with our hero's prospects, and the extraordinary discovery with respect to his uncle's heir he had made when in Naples.

"That sum," observed Leon, "is fully equal, in Spain, to four hundred a-year in your own country—that, together with your pay, will enable you to enjoy all the advantages the officers of rank in our regiment are permitted—they are all younger sons—high in rank, but

with scarcely one of them possessing the amount of income you will have. But surely, presumptive heir to a noble estate, and an earldom in perspective, you are not going tamely to permit the spurious offspring of a malefactor to enjoy the honour and wealth of a noble house."

"At present, Leon, what can I do—I possess no proof of Sir Christopher's heir being a false one—a purchased child. The unfortunate woman from whom the secret might have been obtained is dead, and the wretch who undoubtedly murdered her has fled, Heaven knows where."

"But money would surely make that wretch betray his secret," said Leon.

"It might; but being an escaped felon, and a murderer, it would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to get information of his whereabouts."

"Write to your uncle; the very idea of your suspecting such a fact, would startle his conscience, and so terrify him for the result, that he might contrive to get rid of his false heir as secretly as he procured him, and without injuring the child or ruining his own reputation. Your being possessed of the name of Goldoni, and several facts besides, will be a powerful engine to work with. Suppose Sir Christopher were to die, you might find it almost impossible to disturb the apparent rights of the heir, and thus, a felon's son might become Earl of Delmont."

"Your idea is not a bad one—I will consider of it."

"We have nearly two months more, owing to our colonel's illness, before we join. My father would not consent to your leaving us sooner, and has got increase of leave. I wish now, as we have an hour or two to ourselves, to speak to you on a subject that hangs heavy at my heart. My sister Ina is coming home, for a few weeks; a violent fever having broken out in her convent, the nuns are to be removed, for a time, and the boarders and intended novices return to their respective homes. This unexpected visit of my sister makes me desirous of explaining to you this part of our family history. Ina was educated in a convent at Toledo; but several months

in the summer she always passed at home, and two years of her short life were spent with an aunt, since dead, at Madrid. The convent in which she is to take the veil, is within a league of this castle—she naturally preferred this convent—as she will thus be near her family. Poor Ina! Ah, Sidney, I am a sad, selfish fellow.”

“You, Leon?” said Vernon, struck by the look and tone of sadness in Leon’s face and voice.

“Even so; I had three sisters—Ina was the only one who reached girlhood, and was, from her very birth, destined to be a nun by my mother. My father demurred at this, because he intended me for the church. As I grew up, I imbibed an invincible dislike to the profession selected for me, and I do not think my father, though the most affectionate of parents, would have given up his intention, had not my kind-hearted brother Garcias interfered. At last, however, he consented to release me, provided neither Garcias or myself interfered or objected to Ina’s being a nun—for one or other of us must enter a sanctuary. Now, I loved Ina beyond any other being in the world. My parents knew our deep devotion for each other, and had doubts about Ina’s willingness to take the veil. I had always reprobated the idea of her entering a convent—and from this arose my first cause of dislike to Padre Ignatius. For a long time, I would not consent to this arrangement—I became uneasy, fretful, and unhappy. Ina perceived my uneasiness, and coaxed and teased till she made me confess the cause of my gloom and despondency. Sweet generous soul as she is—she never ceased, till she had persuaded me, that a convent was her own choice, and that if left to herself, she should cheerfully resign the world. I was ungenerous enough, Sidney, to believe that dear, unselfish being—my destiny was changed—and she consented, to all outward appearance, cheerfully to become a nun; but many an hour since, the thoughts of my gentle sister, the loveliest of human beings, buried in the gloomy solitude of a convent’s cell, her young and innocent heart full of love and life, debarred from, and closed against all those

warm feelings nature has so bountifully planted in her bosom—these thoughts have haunted me like a spectre.”

Sidney Vernon looked serious and thoughtful; he knew quite enough of Spanish customs and opinions to think, for a moment, of entering into an argument with the old Conde, to prove the folly, if not cruelty, of forcing a young and unwilling heart to pronounce vows foreign to its feelings, and so contrary, in his opinion, to the dictates of human nature—and, apparently, so opposed to the designs of an All-wise and Omnipotent Creator. But he endeavoured to soothe the really affectionate heart of his friend, and tried to persuade him that something might yet intervene to save his sister from a doom he seemed to dread for her.

Leon shook his head, saying—

“Let us talk no more on this sad subject—it distresses me fearfully, and I would fain hope—almost against hope—that, as you say, something may intervene to prevent what I so dread.”

After a lengthened silence, Leon asked—

“Tell me, Sidney, what are your feelings with regard to Isabella Palafoix? for I think you have gone far to gain her heart.”

Vernon started, and his cheek flushed, as he said—

“You must be in error, Leon; attentive I may have been; but I solemnly declare I never sought to win her heart. I think I have said to you often, that I would never seek to win a maiden’s love, whose position in life would be rendered less distinguished by becoming the wife of a man who could not afford to maintain her in the station and affluence to which she was born. Both the daughters of the Countess de Palafoix are heiresses—their fortunes are large—they are and have always been accustomed to every luxury. My means are small—and I have too much—call it pride if you will—to owe my elevation or fortune, to—”

“Woman’s love!” interrupted Leon, in something like a tone of reproach. “I differ with you, Sidney; we cannot command our feelings in these matters—you will

find that to be the case yet ; love is not to be controlled by either wealth or poverty—for love levels all. You are romantic—you want obstacles—difficulties in the path of love—a smooth course will not suit your impatient aspiring spirit—but the time will come,” added Leon, in a prophetic voice, rising, and pressing his friend’s hand, “and then, take care ! for, like a mountain torrent, your passion will carry all before it. And now, good night !”

The door closed, but Sidney Vernon did not move ; his dark and expressive eyes were bent upon the floor ; what he thought, or what vision it was that rose before him, we know not, but for more than an hour he remained in the same attitude of earnest reflection ; then rising, without summoning Patrick, he retired to rest.

The next day, all the guests, with the exception of the Palafoixs, had departed, and the morning was passed in leave-taking ; Leon went to meet his sister at Cordova, taking the great lumbering family carriage with him ; our hero mounted his horse, and rode into the country, and did not return till the family were assembled for the evening meal. Ina had arrived, but did not appear. That night Vernon’s manner to the Lady Isabella was cold and constrained ; he was evidently struggling with some inward feeling, that mastered him. Leon, too, appeared ill at ease.

The following day, Sidney chanced to enter the library early, and found Leon earnestly conversing with Ina de Haro ; they turned round, and Leon advancing, said, placing the small beautiful hand he held in that of Sidney Vernon—

“Let me make two beings I sincerely love, acquainted. Dear Ina, you already know how much I am indebted to this kind friend.”

Ina de Haro raised her eyes, and let them rest for an instant on those of the young man. Oh ! how that image of surpassing loveliness, like an electric spark, ran through every fibre of his frame ; call the feeling what you may—deny the possibility of love at first sight, be it as it may, whether arising from previous thought or not, it is

sufficient to say, Sidney Vernon loved that sweet and gentle girl from the moment his eyes met hers, and her soft, taper fingers rested within his. There was nothing in the simple grey robe of a convent boarder, not yet a novice, to adorn the exquisite figure of the maiden. She was somewhat above the middle height, her complexion fairer than that of most Spanish women, her eyes were deep blue, fringed with long, silky lashes, and a singularly sweet expression gave a witchery to her face, which could not fail of gaining admiration.

When Leon placed her hand in Vernon's, she raised her eyes, as we have said, and in a voice inexpressibly sweet, exclaimed—

"The Signor Vernon must know that the preservation of my beloved brother's life will ever cause his name to be remembered with gratitude in my prayers."

"A richer reward, dear lady," said Vernon, in a voice as full of melody as her own, and pressing his lips gently on the hand he held—"A richer reward could never be desired nor granted."

"Very gallant indeed!" said a voice, in a bantering tone behind them. It was Isabella de Palafoix, who had entered the room unperceived.

Ina turned round, with a quiet, playful smile on her beautiful lip, without any increase of colour on her cheek, or surprise in her manner, and looking the Lady Isabella in the face, said—

"You have the soft tread of a fairy, Isabella."

"Pray, Ina," said the haughty beauty, in a tone, both Leon and our hero thought cold and cutting, "pray, Ina, is it usual for young novices to give their hands to be kissed by the cavaleros who visit them?"

"Nothing more common, I assure you, Isabella," replied Ina playfully, "especially when the cavalero has saved a brother's life; and you forget, dear friend, I am not yet even a novice."

"Oh! caros," returned Isabella, "that is true; besides, such gallant services deserve a richer reward. Pity, my love, that a novice's dress must remind our cavalero,

that you and the gay world are to be for ever separated."

The colour rushed into Vernon's cheek, as he saw a slight shade pass over Ina's lovely face; but what he was about to say, was cut short, by the entrance of the Condesa de Haro.

From that moment the seeds of a deep and lasting passion took root in the heart of Sidney Vernon; his former resolutions were forgotten, or not allowed to intrude; Leon's warning was unthought of—he was a changed man.

The following day, as he sat beside the Lady Isabella at dinner, she said in a low voice—

"I do verily believe, Signor Vernon, that Ina has thrown some of her convent gloom over you."

Vernon did not immediately reply; and the Lady Isabella continued—

"My mother thinks Ina's parents have acted rashly—at all events, thoughtlessly—in letting her mix with society. When she commences her novitiate, the contrast will be so very great."

"I think it very cruel," said our hero, seriously, and in a tone somewhat bitter, "to deprive society of one so every way calculated to shine in it, and to charm by her beauty and gentleness."

"Ah Signor Vernon, you are, after all, like the rest of your sex, who think forbidden fruit always the sweetest."

"At all events, fair lady," replied our hero, with a smile, "your sweet sex sets us the example; cannot we admire beauty without falling victims to its attractions?"

"Not always, Signor Vernon," replied the fair Spaniard; "like the moth, you can scarcely flutter round a light without danger to your heart, which is quite as likely to be touched as the moth's wing."

A question from Count de Castro, an elderly cavalero, who sat next to Ina, interrupted a conversation that was beginning to be unpleasing to our hero.

That evening, he sat for nearly an hour chatting and

conversing with the lady Ina—who, young as she was, possessed a rich fund of information. Naturally cheerful and bouyant in spirit, she became interested and excited in Vernon's account of England and its society, so different in tone and manner from the stately ceremony observed in the highest circles in Spain. She then spoke of his meeting with Leon, and insensibly drew from him a full account of their travels.

Vernon was a most agreeable talker; he spoke of his naval career, and of the countries he had visited, and the time flew rapidly with the young couple, who forgot that there were other eyes engaged that night in reading their thoughts and watching their actions. But Ina was innocence itself; she looked upon the handsome Englishman only as her brother's preserver and dear friend, and she enjoyed his varied conversation; his romantic ideas and opinions had such charm in them, that she scarcely knew herself the impression they made upon her mind; and when the evening closed, she confessed to herself it had been a very pleasant one.

The following day, Leon set out for Toledo on business for his father.

"Adieu, Sid," he said in parting, "when I return, we shall be thinking of joining our regiment."

Don Garcias, a day or two after, went to Seville, induced at last to exert himself concerning his marriage; and within a week, the Countess de Palafox and her youngest daughter left the party to pass a few days at the Count de Castro's mansion, a few leagues from Cordova; thus leaving Ina and the betrothed of Don Garcias together, and Sidney Vernon their only attendant cavalero.

Don Garcias' betrothed was a most amiable and sweet tempered girl, and greatly attached to Ina, having passed several months in the same convent with her in Toledo. Ina was highly accomplished; the life of retirement she had always led, induced her to read much, as well as devote her time to the study of music and painting. To the latter she was particularly partial; whilst

Vernon was a spirited sketcher, and fond of copying from nature.

When Garcias returned, he and his intended rambled along the banks of the Guadalquiver, or he reclined in a bower, and allowed his lady love to read him to sleep; while Ina and our hero employed themselves in sketching and conversing. Alas! those were dangerous hours for those two young hearts.

One evening, a soft sweet April evening, Sidney Vernon and Ina were left by Don Garcias and his betrothed seated in the saloon of a summer-house, built on the banks of the river, where the pleasure-boat and barge were kept under cover. The Countess of Palafox was expected that night at the castle, and Ina was to return to her convent in two or three days.

Vernon, forgetful of his former protestations of not winning the heart of one whom he could not maintain in the same degree of comfort and splendour as she had been accustomed to, and recollecting the few days that Ina would be permitted to remain at the castle, immediately Don Garcias and his lady-love left the summer-house, took Ina's hand, and, in a low voice, pronounced her name. She started, and her whole frame shook and trembled with an unknown feeling. Vernon, himself, was for a moment overcome; but suddenly sinking at her feet and looking up into her eyes, then filled with tears, he said—

“Ina, I adore you; forgive me, if I have caused those tears; you have known my heart these many days, Ina; but now that the hour of parting has arrived, I am no longer master of myself.”

“Rise, Sidney, I beseech you,” said the gentle girl, her beautiful face pale as death. “I do not blame you. We have both erred—both committed a great sin, with our eyes open to the terrible consequences.”

“Oh say not so, dear Ina; I have considered the consequences say but that you love me, and no human power shall tear you from me.”

“Alas! alas!” sobbed the gentle girl, “after all I am

but a weak poor mortal; but God alone can change my destiny, it were madness to think or hope."

"Say not so, beloved, for I do hope, or I would not have dared to win that dear heart;" and he pressed the agitated, trembling girl to his breast. "Listen to me, Ina, a year has yet to elapse before you take the final vow; let nothing induce you to shorten that period." There was a rustling near the door that startled those two young lovers; Vernon paused, but all remaining silent, he continued, "a thousand things may occur to release you from your shackles, and I will do my utmost, with the assistance of Leon, to take you from the convent. Promise, faithfully promise, not to shorten the period allowed you."

The promise was given, and the first loving kiss was imprinted on the young girl's lips, and with a beating heart, and trembling limbs, she was led to the house.

The countess and her daughter had arrived, and a few hours after, Leon De Haro rode up the avenue.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE following morning, Sidney Vernon observed that his assiduous attendant, Patrick, lingered over his task in arranging his clothes, as if he had something on his mind that he wished to communicate. Well accustomed to read his open and intelligent countenance, our hero at once said—

"You have some kind of intelligence burdening your conscience, Patrick, I can plainly perceive, so make a clean breast of it."

"Upon my conscience, sir," said Patrick, with a quiet smile; "that's just what the Padre said. Did you ever

meet him, sir ; the family priest, I mean, Padre Ignatius ; as they call him ?”

“ Strange to say, Patrick, I have not seen him since my arrival ; I think I heard Leon say he was absent, but have you ?”

“ Faix, I have, sir, a dozen times. You see, sir, I’m a sheep belonging to the Padre’s flock, so he says, sir ; but, upon my soul, I begin to doubt it.”

“ Why, how the deuce, Patrick, did you contrive to make yourself understood, or understand him ?”

“ Be gorra, sir, for the best of all possible reasons. Faix, he says, either himself, or his father, or mother, I don’t rightly remember which, was an Irishman.”

“ An Irishman !” repeated our hero, smiling, “ he was joking you.”

“ Faix, joking or no joking, your honour, he speaks the best of English ; and says, he often heard of my family, which, by the same token, is more than ever I heard myself ; seeing that, I never saw either my own father or mother, though, in course, I must have had one or the other of them, like all the rest of the world.”

“ No doubt about that, Patrick ; but what did the priest say to you ?”

“ You see, sir, one day I takes a wrong turn in getting to this part of this big house, and, somehow, went quite astray, when suddenly I come bolt against a short, fat, lump of a little, middle-aged man, in priest’s robes.”

“ ‘ God save your reverence !’ says I, bobbing my head.

“ ‘ What brings you here, my son ?’ says the priest, in downright English, which made me start. ‘ Don’t be frightened,’ says he ; ‘ you are the very man I want to see ; go in there.’ ”

“ And he pushed open a door, and in I went, sir, into a fine, large room, with heaps of books on shelves, and a beautiful figure of our Saviour on the cross, in solid silver, and an altar covered with a fine cloth, with silver vessels on it.

“ ‘ Now, what’s the reason, my son,’ said the priest,

sitting down, and fixing upon me a pair of eyes like two live coals—on my conscience they went through me: ‘what’s the reason you, a good Catholic, did not seek me? You are one of my stray sheep.’”

“‘Be gorra, your reverence,’ says I, plucking up courage, for his eyes bothered me entirely, ‘how was I to know your reverence could speak English, and the devil a word—’”

“‘Hold your profane tongue,’ said his reverence, angrily. How dare you mention the enemy of mankind in that light way before me? Kneel down, let me hear you repeat an Ave.’”

“Musha, but I was completely bothered, sir, entirely; for, as I never was taught one, it’s not likely I could make a guess at it; and faix, sir, at this blessed moment I don’t know whether I’m a heretic or a papist! You see, sir, I was picked up under a hedge, in harvest time, with a bit of paper pinned to my tatters, by the Serjeant of a marching reiment, going through Skibbereen; the paper said,—‘This is Patrick O’Shaughnessy, and he comes of decent married people; but, ochone, without a copper to spend for bread. Take care of him, and God will bless you.’”

“And this is all you know, Patrick, of your birth and parentage?”

“Faix, your honour, that’s my genealogy, and all I know of my ancestors. It saves me one trouble, sir, counting one’s grandfathers and great-grandfathers; it’s better than a Welch pedigree, which always takes three or four of the family to tell, one or two not having breath to keep up the string of their descendants.”

Vernon smiled, begging Patrick to shorten his story, as it only wanted a half-hour to breakfast.

“What did the priest say to you when you could not repeat an Ave?”

“Why, sir, I told him the truth. Says I, ‘when I was in a Protestant regiment I went to church with them, and said my prayers; some time after, I entered the — Dragoons; they were Irish, and mostly Papists,

and they swore I was an Irishman, and must be a good Papist by my name; so, for a quiet life, I went to chapel, but, faix, I had not time to learn anything, before we were ordered abroad, and the parson of the regiment who joined us—parson Tom he was called—and, upon my conscience, sir, he was a broth of a boy, for a short sermon and big draught—anything under a dozen tumblers of strong whiskey punch injured his digestion, and a long sermon spoilt his wind entirely.

“‘The fact is,’ said the priest, angrily, ‘you are worse than a heathen. Where do you think you will go to, you miserable sinner, eh?’”

“‘Faix,’ replied I, a little vexed. “it’s hard to say. Father Murphy said that all Protestants went to —— excuse me, father, it’s an ugly name; and then parson Tom assured us that all Papists were idolaters, and were sure to go—”

“‘You are benighted, unfortunate sinner,’ said his reverence, solemnly; ‘but I will try and save your poor soul, if I can. I’m an Irishman.’”

“I think he said so, but he coughed and sneezed at the moment, so I won’t swear he said he was one; but he said he knew all the O’Shaughnessys, father and son, years back; and that they were true sons of Holy Mother Church, and that in Ireland, when he was there, priests were hunted like mad dogs, for only saying their prayers their own way.

“‘You must come to me twice a week, I will teach you the only faith that can save your simple soul from the enemy of mankind. Say nothing to any one, especially to your master, for he is a heretic; and if you hesitate you are lost.’”

“By the powers, sir, with this and that he frightened me; for, after four or five visits, faix, I did nothing but dream of purgatory, and then it came into my head, what was to become of your honour and the heaps of heretics of all kinds that lives, and have died?”

“However, as long as his reverence confined himself

to the care of my soul, I said nothing ; but I soon found he had other fish to fry.

“ ‘Ho! ho!’ says I, ‘be me soul, you’re mistaken, if you think I’m the cook to fry them.’ ”

“ And, after a month’s teaching, I began to think parson Tom was the best to deal with ; for, do what I would, pray day and night, still his reverence said I must go thorough purgatory till I was prayed out of it ; and it costs a power of money to do that. Would you believe it, sir, his reverence asked me to become a spy upon your honour ? ”

“ A spy upon me, Patrick, what could he want with me ? ”

“ Why, sir, a few days ago, the priest sent for me, says he, ‘ You must help me, Patrick, to save a soul from the snares of the evil one ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Faix, your reverence, if you can’t do that, it’s small use my help will be to you, seeing that my own soul is in such a ticklish situation. ’ ”

“ ‘ The very fact of your trying to save a soul on the point of perishing, will save you, at least, one hundred years in purgatory. ’ ”

“ ‘ The Lord save us ! ’ I muttered. ”

“ ‘ Listen to me, my son, your master is a lost soul, he is past my power to save ; but there’s a young creature in this house who is devoted to God, she is to take the veil ; therefore she is sacred ; she is the spouse of our Blessed Redeemer. If you will do as I bid you, my son, I will pray you out of purgatory, fifty years sooner. ’ ”

“ ‘ Only tell me what I am to do, father, ’ says I, beginning to understand what his reverence was after, ‘ just save me the other fifty while you are about it, and it’s a bargain. ’ ”

“ ‘ My son, you do not know what you ask. If a rich man had to pay for as many masses, as it would require to save him fifty years of purgatory, you would have some idea of the value of what I offer you. Your master has no regard for the sacred rights of our Holy Church ; like all heretics, he scoffs at things he knows

nothing about. I want you, therefore, for your own interest, and the interest of our true faith, to keep a strict watch over all your master's actions, and try and find out what his plans and intentions are with respect to that innocent girl, who is destined to renounce the world. I fear he is misleading her; even if her father was likely to consent to her renouncing her vows, it would break her mother's heart, and be certain to—'

" 'The Lord save us!' he used an awful word. 'Condemn her in the next world.' "

" 'You see, my son, we do not wish to speak of this to the old Condé, for he is infatuated with your master, because he saved his son's life, and he would not believe a word of it. I don't wish to injure your master, only to save the lady Ina's precious soul. So, now, if you have any regard for your own salvation, do as I tell you, and recollect,' and then he fixed those terrible eyes of his upon me, 'recollect you are in a country where the church can punish as well as reward, and woe betide him who betrays her.—Now go.' "

" 'Ho, ho, your reverence,' says I to myself, 'is that the way. Be gorra, I'm done with your doctrine of purgatory altogether. Parson Tom said it's all moonshine about praying people out of purgatory; he said there was no such stepping-stone to a worse place; we must be good and righteous, and then we may be saved, if not, we'll be punished; and that's all fair, and from this out, I've made up my mind to become a good protestant if I can.' "

" 'Well, I think you are right, Patrick,' said our hero, "and if ever we get into the way of a worthy clergyman, he will, no doubt, help you out of your difficulties. In the meantime, read the bible, and that will do you good at all events; and keep out of the priest's way. I do not wish you to employ deceit or say what is false, therefore avoid him.' "

At this moment the breakfast bell was heard.

At that social meal the Lady Ina was not present; the Lady Isabella Palafox appeared in high spirits, and pro-

posed a ride to Cordova, to which Vernon, not wishing to appear particular, cheerfully assented, though he felt certain Ina would not be of the party.

"I am glad you are going to ride to Cordova," observed Leon, "I have a message from Major Valez, he has two splendid chargers for sale, and offers them to you; we can see them to-day."

"Do not purchase more than one," said Don Garcias, "my groom returns in a day or two with three or four remarkably well-bred Andalusian horses; they were bred on my estate, and I beg you will accept two of them; you cannot do with less for yourself and man."

Vernon knew Don Garcias prided himself on his breed of Andalusian horses, and returning him suitable thanks, they all started an hour or so after, for Cordova.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was late ere the party returned to the castle; and notwithstanding all his efforts to appear unconcerned, Sidney Vernon was thoughtful and uneasy; he perceived plainly enough that Isabella Palafox suspected his feelings for the Lady Ina; and at one or two observations she made during the ride back, he felt his cheek flush and his heart beat quicker, for she insinuated that the Lady Ina would have left the castle to return to the Convent before they arrived at home. Anxious and depressed he sought his chamber, as soon as they reached the castle, and eagerly questioned Patrick, for Leon De Haro had remained at Cordova.

"It's true, sir," said Patrick, "the Lady Ina left the castle this morning in the covered carriage with the Condessa and Padre Ignatius. It's scarcely four miles,

sir, to the convent, for both the Lady Ina's mother and the priest returned two hours ago."

"That meddling priest," said Sidney Vernon, in a tone of intense vexation, "has accomplished his purpose. I must get a letter conveyed to the Lady Ina, by some means or other."

"Troth, sir, it is easy to do that. Pepeta, the Lady Ina's favourite attendant, will not leave for the convent with the mistress's effects till to-morrow."

"And you think," said our hero, "that you have sufficient influence with Pepeta, to get her to take charge of a letter; how have you managed to make yourself understood?"

"Faix, I'll stake my salvation," said Patrick, "that I will get your honour's letter taken, and an answer back."

"At all events, Patrick, you had better not stake your salvation, for as it is, it's rather dubious whether you are to owe it to the intercession of his reverence, the Father Confessor, or wait till you are more enlightened on the subject."

"Be Gorra, your honour, Padre Ignatius shall have nothing more to do with it any how; he has been deceiving me, sorrow a drop of Irish blood has he in his veins."

"How did you find that out, Patrick?"

"From Don Garcias' own man, who arrived this morning, after you went to Cordova; he has been to England, and so has the Padre, years ago, with the old Condé, who went in the Spanish Ambassador's train. So, says I, your Father Confessor is a countryman of mine."

" 'A countryman of yours,' says Don Garcias' man, - and what do you call yourself? "

"Bother! What do you take me for—an Irishman, to be sure."

" 'An Irishman,' says he, 'and where's that? "

"Oh, be gorra, that's good," said I, laughing out, "ask the King of England where all the fighting men in

his regiments came from. Why, from Ireland. Do you know the difference, says I to him, between an Irishman and an Englishman?"

"How should I?" says he, 'are you making a fool of me.'

"Not I, faith, my good man. You see Ireland and England are two Islands, with one King, who always lives in England, and all the big men take their money out of Ireland, and spend it in England, and thus the little Island, having never the sunshine of the King's smile, don't prosper—so that an Irishman may be known by being as lank and lean as a herring, with plenty of rags about him, and a score of ragged children at his heels; but an Englishman is always a fat, and jovial-looking fellow, plenty of cash in his pocket, and good clothes to his back—always ready to have a slap at poor Paddy whenever he can, comfortably."

"And what put it into your head that our Father Confessor was an Irishman? I'm sure he's fat enough for an Englishman, and, besides, I know he was born on the Condé's estate, near Seville, so that puts your question at rest."

"I have written the letter," said Sidney Vernon, folding and sealing one he had been writing, without paying the slightest attention to Patrick's dialogue. But Patrick was a philosopher in some things. Not the least surprised or disappointed at his master's inattention to his discourse, he took it for granted that all he had said was heard, understood, and appreciated. "Now here is a present for Pepeta." Giving Patrick a very pretty purse with some gold shining through the network. "Give her that, and this letter. I am already aware she is willing to serve me for the sake of her mistress, and tell her—though how you will manage to do that—."

"Oh, faith, sir, don't make yourself uneasy about that—Pepeta and I understand one another wonderfully."

"Well, give her that letter, and tell her to get an answer delivered to you by some person she can implicitly

trust in. I would speak to her myself, but it would be observed, so be careful how you manage this matter. If it pleases God, the Lady Ina shall never be a nun if I can help it."

"A mortal sin, your honour; and Pepeta says, the Lady detests nuns and convents; she's too good and too beautiful to be shut up in such prisons."

"Well, take care how you manage this business; do not attract notice."

"Never fear, sir, for they won't mind my talking a bit to Pepeta before she goes, for they know I've been trying to pick up a bit of Spanish, against the time we join the army."

Leon de Haro returned early the next day, and immediately sought the chamber of his friend, who was busy writing letters to England. It was easy to perceive, by his countenance, that he was vexed and troubled. He sat down, and seeing his friend pause and look anxiously in his face, he said—

"Ina has been sent to the convent, in my absence. I fear, Sidney, what my heart foreboded has come to pass."

"It has, Leon," said Sidney Vernon calmly, understanding at once his friend's meaning, "I would not hide the truth from one who loves his sister so dearly."

"I knew it," said Leon de Haro, in a dejected tone, "But tell me, does Ina suspect your feelings towards her?"

"She does, Leon."

"Alas! poor Ina! must I blame you or myself—knowing as I do, that your enthusiastic, romantic disposition, would be sure to lead your imagination against your judgment. I ought to have prevented this visit; but in truth I thought you were getting attached to Isabella Palafox, and I know my father and mother thought so too, which no doubt blinded them to the consequences that might follow my sister's visit; but now, alas! you have wrecked your own peace, as well as embittered the seclusion of my poor ill-fated sister."

"My dear Leon," said Sidney Vernon, his face flushing with contending feelings, "why give way to such gloomy

and desponding thoughts? For worlds I would not have won Ina's love, if I considered an union with her improbable. It is impossible that your father and mother can have the heart to compel—"

"Nay, Sidney," hastily interrupted the young Spaniard, "you must not judge my parents from your own thoughts and ideas—you cannot enter into the feelings of a Spaniard—nor judge of the motives by which a conscientious catholic is guided. The cause that first induced my mother to dedicate Ina to a life of seclusion, did not originate in a desire to aggrandize or increase the wealth of the other members of the family; for my sister Ina was bequeathed a large fortune by her aunt, and which fortune goes into the convent with her. Ina was destined to be a nun to fulfil a vow made by my mother when on the point of death. Though you are well aware that I myself do not approve of those rash and unthinking vows, so destructive to the happiness of others, yet my mother thinks otherwise. I think all convents and monastic establishments futile and fallacious foundations; for the same amount of good can as easily be performed, without either vows of seclusion, or those gloomy receptacles for poor deluded creatures."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Leon," interrupted our hero. "Like you, I always considered the inmates of convents to be composed of compulsory victims—younger daughters of noble families—disappointed virgins, past the age of forty, who retire to rail at a world they imagine they could no longer enjoy; add a few fanatics, a few imbeciles, and a few whose imaginations have run away with their reason—and you have them all. Would you then, Leon," he continued, earnestly and eagerly, "would you blame me, for striving to snatch, from such compulsory bondage, a being formed by our Creator to be the light and life of one of the opposite sex—created with every charm a bountiful Providence could bestow—full of youth and love, and enjoying, in her young heart, all those sweet and pure pleasures brought into existence for our use, and to enjoy which we were created."

"I say nothing against all that," said Leon gloomily, "it's all true, I feel it in my heart—it poisons my existence—for though no rigid catholic, my oath is sacred—I dare not, I cannot interfere; and to turn my father or mother from their purpose—if you had the wealth of Cræsus, and all the titles his majesty of Spain could confer, you would fail; therefore it is, my dear friend, that I despair. I would, on my soul, sacrifice everything but honour, to see Ina your wife—the dearest wish of my heart would be gratified."

"Dear Leon, I know it," said Vernon, pressing the hand of his friend with deep emotion. "Still, I do not, and will not give up the blessed, thrice blessed hope."

"Recollect, dear friend," interrupted Leon, "that you are in a strictly catholic country—you know nothing of the priesthood, and God send you may never feel their power. What you tell me of Padre Ignatius trying to tempt the servant to betray his master, is nothing new to me; I forgot that he spoke English, indeed I never thought of it; I knew he accompanied my father to England many years ago, but never bestowed a thought on whether he mastered the difficulties of your language or not. There is one—one, solitary ray of hope, it strikes me now—and that is the aspect of affairs in this country. I fear me, France will over-run this country; Napoleon will overthrow all our institutions—Ina will not take the veil for twelve months—we know not what may occur in that space of time. The French respect no religious institutions, it is said—they will drive forth monks and nuns; and this might change Ina's destiny—I say might, it is a feeble ray, still it is a ray of hope, though shining through a dismal cloud. Let things rest as they are, Sidney—promise me that—be patient, and depend on me; I will watch, though I will not interfere, but you shall have timely warning—God forgive me, if I am acting wrongly; but as it now stands you must save Ina if you can."

"Dearest and best of friends," said Sidney, embracing

the noble Spaniard, "I obey you—my life, at any moment, shall be perilled freely to save one so dear to us both."

"I must speak now of other things," said Leon, after a pause, during which each was busy with his thoughts; "we must leave after to-morrow for ——, where our regiment is quartered. I have had a letter from our colonel—so let us lose no time—for stirring and troublous times are coming."

For nearly an hour the friends conversed, and then separated, each somewhat happier in mind than when they met.

CHAPTER XXV

WE pass over a period of nearly two months. It was the month of May, Sidney Vernon and his friend Leon had joined their regiment at ——, and our hero had been most kindly and flatteringly received by his colonel, Don Diego de Montego. He had taken leave of the Conde and Condessa de Haro with feelings of sincere gratitude and affection, particularly with respect to the old Conde, whose manner and words were more like those of a parent than a friend.

"Consider Castle de Haro," said the Conde, holding our hero's hand, and pressing it warmly, "as your home in this country. These are not mere words, Sidney," continued the warm-hearted old Spaniard—for he latterly always addressed his guest by his Christian name, "they are from the heart. Whenever Leon seeks his home, I shall expect to see you."

Don Garcias accompanied them to Seville—and, at parting, as he wrung our hero's hand, he whispered—

"I know your secret—and, as far as lies in my power, count me your friend."

This was an extraordinary effort for Don Garcias ; and it cheered our hero's heart in many a trying hour afterwards. During those two months, Vernon paid every attention to the profession he had adopted. The officers of the regiment vied with each other in showing kindness—the language he spoke fluently—and his duty, and routine of service, he was learning rapidly.

At this period, the whole of Spain became engaged in a furious struggle for its liberties. By an act of treachery, the French had gained possession of the citadel of Pampeluna, and shortly after, of the city of Barcelona, and its important fortress of Mont Juif. Colonel Montego's regiment of cavalry took the field ; in the space of two months, it was engaged in several actions—in which our hero highly distinguished himself, so much so, as not only to attract the attention and praise of his colonel, but also of General D——.

Owing to the undecided measures of the Spanish Government, and the miserable jealousy existing between the different generals, they, however, invariably got the worst of the contest—and Colonel Montego's regiment having suffered severely, was suddenly ordered to Madrid.

It was now the latter end of June—our hero was still ignorant of his accession to the estates of the late Earl of Delmont. No communication being carried on between the various cities except by private couriers, the posts being cut off by the French troops dispersed through the provinces, Leon had not heard from home for nearly two months.

In the same regiment with the two friends was a Major Doaz and Lieutenant Valerde—with these officers, they formed a sincere friendship. The capital of Spain, at this time, was in a state of alarming tumult. King Charles and his infamous minister, Godoy, being frustrated in their intended flight, the former came to the determination of abdicating his throne in favour of his son, the Prince of Asturias. Detachments of cavalry and artillery were directed to cover the road from Madrid to Seville. The Walloon and Spanish guards were marched

from the capital of Aranjuez, where the court then was—only a few regiments of infantry and Colonel Montego's regiment of cavalry remaining in garrison.

It was during this state of affairs that the king and his ministers attempted to leave Madrid; but the people detected the royal party—cut the traces of the carriage, and would inevitably have sacrificed Godoy, had he not effected his escape.

The following day, the minister's palace, and those of all his relatives, were attacked, and levelled to the ground, while he himself, dragged from his place of concealment, was finally lodged in the public prison.

During these scenes, Colonel Montego and his officers found it extremely difficult to keep the men in check. A spirit of insubordination was rapidly creeping into the ranks, which was, however, quieted for a time by the abdication of the king. This caused great rejoicings in Madrid; the houses were decorated with flowers and garlands, and, at night, brilliantly illuminated. A grand *fete* and ball was given by the Marquis de Miranda, to which all the officers of the garrison were invited.

The Marquis de Miranda inhabited one of the most imposing mansions in the Alcala. It was tastefully illuminated, and presented to the thousands outside a most brilliant spectacle. The people, with whom our hero's regiment was extremely popular, made way, with a loud cheer, for Leon, Vernon, and Major Doaz to pass.

Throwing their cloaks to an attendant in the entrance chamber, they were marshalled through the grand hall, up a flight of wide, marble stairs, lined with statues, vases of rare flowers, and various coloured lamps, and an immense number of domestics in gorgeous liveries. It was the first assembly of the kind that our hero had attended in Spain. Dressed in the superb uniform of his regiment, his tall and powerful figure attracted many of the fair Spanish maidens, who, from under their graceful veils parted on the forehead, shot many a bright glance from their dark eyes. In the saloon of reception a great crowd assembled—grandees, priests, officers, statesmen, and

foreigners of distinction then in Madrid, were mingled together, with some of the greatest beauties of the opposite sex Madrid could boast of.

"You must confess, Sidney," said Leon de Haro to his friend, as they proceeded through the saloon, "this is no bad specimen of a Spanish grandee's wealth and mode of entertaining. However, the Marquis Miranda is certainly not only one of the richest noblemen, but undoubtedly the most extravagant and profuse; his *fetes* and his bull-fights are the constant wonder and talk of the good people of Madrid."

"It is assuredly a very striking and magnificent scene," said Sidney, gazing round him with surprise; "but I must call upon you for information; there are several persons in a group, with crosses and diamond stars in profusion, all strangers to me."

"And nearly so to me," said Leon. "Do you feel inclined to go into the dancing saloons?"

"Never less inclined in my life—the heat is too great; but look, here's a surprise," and his cheek flushed as he directed Leon's attention to the entrance of the countess de Palafox and the Lady Isabella.

"Santiago!" exclaimed Leon de Haro, "we shall learn news, at last, from home," and they moved forward to meet the countess; the Lady Isabella had at once perceived them.

"Who, Leon, is that remarkable-looking man the countess has stopped to speak to?"

"That," said a voice close to his ear before Leon could reply—for he had got in advance—"that is the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, Don Felix Gomez Henriques de los Formes."

Vernon turned sharply round at the sound of the voice, which he recognised at once, though he had never heard it but once before, and beheld, close beside him, Padre Ignatius.

"Glad to see you so well, my son," said the priest, "and rejoiced to hear that you have gained laurels in the field against our enemies."

Before Vernon could reply, Leon had heard and recognized the speaker, and, turning back, said—

“By Jove! wonders will never cease; you here, Padre?—how is this?—and how is my beloved father, mother, and all the rest?”

“Thanks to the blessed saints, all well and happy, my dear son.”

“And my sister Ina?”

Vernon felt his breath come and go, and his heart beat almost audibly, as the priest replied, with a side glance at our hero—

“Well, and most happy and resigned in the peaceful retreat she has selected, and has become attached to—and is looking forward to the day that she renounces this vain and sinful world with hope and joy.”

“Priest, 'tis false,” was bursting from the lips of Sidney Vernon, when Leon replied, in a dry, cold tone—

“You are a poor judge of woman's feelings, Padre! you cannot always read the workings of their heart in their features. But what has brought you and the Countess to Madrid in these troubled times?”

“We arrived only this morning, my son. I came with the Countess on business, and we expect to remain a few days. We did not know that your regiment was in Madrid; but heard of your gallant stand at Burgos, and of Signor Vernon retaking your colours after a terrible conflict.”

There was a something in the priest's manner, tone, and look, that neither our hero or his friend liked; and the Countess, moving on again towards them, the young men left the priest, who at once became engaged in conversation with another ecclesiastic.

“I recollect,” said Leon to his friend, “now I think of it, what brings the priest to Madrid. The bishop of Oveido claims a large portion of the countess's estate near Aranjuez as church-lands; as that is part of the eldest daughter's portion, the priest came, no doubt, on the part of Don Garcias—the result will be, that any amicable arrangement will decidedly be in favour of the

church. Ha! we have missed the countess and her daughter, who has walked off with that dashing officer of the Walloon Guards, Colonel Wallenstein. There is a countryman of yours, Sidney, I will swear, in a naval uniform, and a handsome fellow he is."

Sidney turned round, looking in the direction Leon de Haro notified; but remained, for a moment, perfectly astounded; he rubbed his eyes—looked again—there was no mistake—he beheld his friend, the dear companion of his youth, Henry Tressidder, in the uniform of a British naval lieutenant.

"I must leave you for a while, Leon; that Englishman is the dearest friend of my early days—we both served for years in the same ship. I considered him either lost at sea, or a prisoner to the French. This is a joyful and surprising meeting."

Sidney Vernon made his way through the crowd till he reached the side of his friend, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said in a low voice—

"Henry—my dear Henry—this is a joyful meeting."

The young Englishman turned with a start as the well-remembered tones reached his ear; but the bronzed skin and dark moustache, and, above all, the rich uniform of the——dragoons, seemed to stagger and bewilder him; but the instant his eyes rested on those of his old friend, he was recognized with such an exclamation of intense joy, as startled all the formal Spaniards near them. Henry Tressidder grasped Sidney's hands.

"Oh! by Jove! this is a blessed chance, my dear old friend; come, let us heave ahead, and get out of this crowd, that I may give you a hearty shake of the hand, without startling these grave-looking dons."

And putting his arm under his friend's, they passed into a smaller saloon.

"Jupiter Ammon! Wonders will never cease," said Henry, as he gazed with admiration at the noble and soldierly appearance of his companion. "I always said you were a head too tall for a sailor, Sid; but what colours do you hail by now?"

"Spanish, Henry, Spanish ; but do not talk of wonders, for I am confounded and bewildered at seeing you, and, of all places, in Madrid ; you are a lieutenant too, but where the deuce do you come from, and where bound to ?"

"A touch of the old trade, Sid ; but Lord bless you, it will take us a week to haul our wind and sail back over the old ground ; but to see you turned into a Spanish dragoon, by Jove ! I am all in the wind, and with such a magnificent property."

"Magnificent property !" said Vernon, staring at his friend. "I do not understand you."

"How long is it since you heard from England ?" demanded Tressidder.

"More than six months, and very anxious I have been, particularly about you."

"Oh ! by Jupiter ! that accounts for it. Why, we all wrote to you, directing our letters to Lisbon, to the care of some long-named fellow, I forget now ; but not a word could we get in reply. Wrote to old Polworth, asked if he had heard of you ; got word back from your sweet little Louise, now a splendid girl, that you had never been in Lisbon, or you would surely have called to see her. But it's no use our talking here ; one thing, however, I will tell you, if you have not heard it ; you missed your shot for once—Elliot's alive, though done up for the service."

"I heard that," said our hero, "and thank God I have not his death to answer for."

"And pray, Signor Vernon," asked a sweet voice behind the two speakers, "who have you been near killing ?"

The young men turned towards the speaker ; it was the Lady Isabella Palafox, who had approached them unperceived, leaning on the arm of Colonel Wallenstein, with whom our hero was slightly acquainted.

"Allow me," said Vernon, with a heightened colour, "to introduce to you the friend whom you have often heard me lament the loss of ; the Senor Tressidder."

"Ha ! indeed," said the fair Spaniard, bowing and

church. Ha! we have missed the countess and her daughter, who has walked off with that dashing officer of the Walloon Guards, Colonel Wallenstein. There is a countryman of yours, Sidney, I will swear, in a naval uniform, and a handsome fellow he is."

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"Allow me," said Vernon, with a heightened colour, "to introduce to you the friend whom you have often heard me lament the loss of ; the Senor Tressidder."

"Ha ! indeed," said the fair Spaniard, bowing and

returning the admiring salute of the young sailor. "I remember the name well; you thought your friend was lost at sea, or perhaps pining in a French prison; allow me, Senor, to congratulate you on your escape from the very disagreeable alternatives." This last sentence was spoke in very tolerable English.

Henry Tressidder, struck with the grace and beauty of the fair Spaniard, paid her some well-turned compliments, which she contrived to understand; while a few words of conversation on the state of public affairs passed between Colonel Wallenstein and our hero.

"You speak English charmingly, Senorita," remarked Henry Tressidder to the Lady Isabella. "Have you been much in England?"

"No, Senor, never; but I had a very able instructor in your friend Senor Vernon," with a pretty smile of malice at our hero; "but he's getting another pupil, more docile, and anxious to learn his language, and my lessons are discontinued; is not that the case, Senor Vernon? though bye-the-bye," she added, seeing our hero colour to the very temples, "I ought first to congratulate you on your achievements at Burgos and Santaline."

Vernon merely bowed; and after a few inquiries concerning her mother, he wished her a pleasant evening, and passed on with his friend Tressidder.

"That's a splendid girl, Sidney," said Henry Tressidder, "but I suspect there's something in the wind between you; a serious quarrel, eh, Sid?"

"No, Harry," replied our hero, gravely, "but if you have had enough of this splendid *fete*, let us retire to your hotel, and have a quiet supper there; we have much to say and to hear on both sides."

"I would rather have an hour's chat with you, Sid, than a dozen *fetes*; so heave ahead, and save tide—though this is a human tide, not easy to stem."

In less than half an hour the two friends were seated in a saloon of the hotel where Lieutenant Tressidder had located himself, with a good supper and a couple of flasks of light wine before them.

"Before we begin our mutual recital of past events, tell me, Henry, what on earth brought you so far from the water?"

"That's easily answered, Sid. I was appointed, on my return home, second lieutenant to the Racehorse frigate, Captain D——; we sailed for the Mediterranean, with orders to touch at Cadiz, and land the honourable Sir ——, who was on a mission to Madrid for our government. The frigate received fresh orders, and was to remain at Cadiz. The Honourable Sir —— took a fancy to my accompanying him, and I obtained leave from our captain, who is a devilish good fellow, so here I am. Now, Sid, I know you to be the most careless fellow in existence about money; nevertheless, there is too much at stake, at present, to be quite so indifferent about it. You said you had received no news from England for this six months; do you know that your worthy uncle is now Earl of Delmont?"

"No, I knew he was next in succession, but I regret to hear of the Earl's death, for I remember hearing that he was once a very great friend of my poor father's."

"Well, I am sorry to say he is dead. The title and estates of Delmont went, of course, to your uncle, but strange to say, he has left all his estates and other property of all kinds to you."

"To me!" repeated Vernon, in the greatest astonishment.

"By Jupiter Ammon, it's a fact, for the late Earl's lawyer and executor wrote to my father, requesting to know where you might be heard of, stating the facts of the estates being left to you, and in case of your not being in the land of the living, to the crown. Now I am very happy to find the said crown has no chance of them, and I hope to see, some of these days, a whole lot of young Vernons, whether their mother be Spanish or not, though I would rather she should hail from old England."

Vernon remained for several minutes immersed in deep thought; how might this intelligence affect the

Condé De Haro, with respect to Ina's destiny, was his first idea.

"There is something serious on your mind, Sid," said Henry, affectionately, "you have not half the spirits you used to have ; you are in love—so am I. Heigh ho, a sailor in love, they say, is never down-hearted ; with a Dragoon, I suppose, the case is different ; but cheer up, Sid, and I will tell you all my adventures from the time we parted, even to my love-making to your dear, amiable, sweet little cousin Mary."

"My cousin Mary," said Sidney Vernon, looking up with a surprised smile. "Well, Henry, you have been sailing in queer places since we parted ; where on earth did you meet Mary Vernon ?"

"In the prettiest place in the world for making love, Sid, in the groves and bowers of Tressidder House ; so clap a stopper on your jaw tackle, as old Jem Marline used to say, and listen to my story."

Sidney Vernon smiled at his ever light-hearted friend, who, in a very short time, made him acquainted with all his adventures, from his shipwreck in the brig, to his meeting with Mary Vernon.

"Now, Sid, I have spun my yarn, here's your health, and may you long live to enjoy the noble property left you. No such luck for me ; I must climb the ladder till I gain a captain's epaulettes, and then, sweet Mary, I strike my colours and yield to the prettiest flag a man ever struck to, a woman's love ! Now, begin, Sid—I'm all impatience ; you were always such a deuce of a romantic fellow, and so confoundedly fond of the smiles of beauty, that I expect at least half-a-dozen heroines to your story, especially in this country of bright eyes, lovely ankles, and remarkably short petticoats."

"You are the same light-hearted, cheerful soul, Harry, as ever ; in many a sad hour you have cheered me, and driven my gloomy thoughts to the winds."

"Yes, Sid, and many a time you risked life and your commission to save Harry Tressidder from the disgrace his thoughtless disposition plunged him into," said the

sailor, stretching out his hand and clasping that of his friend with much emotion.

With a smile of affection on his early friend, Sidney Vernon began his narrative, relating all minutely, interrupted, it is true, by exclamations of great astonishment from Tressidder. On stating the singular discovery he had made with respect to his uncle's heir, Tressidder said, in a serious tone—

“This is a very painful discovery, and it's very strange ; it strikes me now, perhaps it did a little then, but I did not heed it, my sweet Mary often spoke to me of her little brother William ; I saw the boy myself, when I paid her a visit, just before I joined my ship at Portsmouth. ‘By Jove, Mary,’ said I, not meaning any thing, ‘your brother is not very like any of you, he's as dark as a young Indian.’ Mary coloured, but I thought she looked so amazingly lovely that, by Jove ! I forgot what I was saying or talking about, and stole a kiss at parting instead. But what's to be done ? you are not going to let yourself be choused out of the title and estates ; and yet,” added the young Cornishman, thinking of his sweet Mary, and looking serious, “it's a deuced unpleasant affair, such a disclosure would be dreadful to make public.”

“I will never do so, Harry,” said Sidney Vernon, calmly and seriously, “I will not allow the public to breathe so foul a stain on the name of Vernon.”

“And yet, good Heavens ! it's a monstrous shame to permit the son of an Italian felon to perpetuate the noble title of Delmont, and inherit the estates.”

“I have often thought over this subject,” said our hero, thoughtfully, “and I have come to the determination to leave the sifting of this affair to the chapter of accidents ; for I feel satisfied, that Providence, in good time, will punish the guilty. I have thought of writing to my uncle, and stating what I know, advising him to get quietly rid of this false heir, which he could easily do, and yet provide decently for the boy, who certainly is **not** answerable for the acts of others.”

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"You lay all the blame on the Earl, and none on your aunt, who must have been a consenting party, at all events. I have, however, heard Mary say, though she is cold and stern in manner, she has a most kind heart and disposition. She certainly has thrown no obstacle in the way of my union with Mary, though your uncle has; however, I have a promise from Mary, the moment I obtain a commandership she will be mine, and my father and brother have considerable interest. Now, with respect to your love for the Lady Ina De Haro, what is your purpose, Sidney? By your own account, I greatly fear you will never change the determination of her parents, of compelling her to take the veil. What can you do?"

"I am resolved to escape out of this country with her; once my wife, her really affectionate parents will rejoice at being spared the pain of embittering her young life."

"This is a bigotted, priest-ridden country," said Henry, "carrying off one destined for a nun, and whose fortune enters the convent with her, will rouse all the bitterness and vengeance of the priesthood. The Inquisition still exists in all its hideous malignancy and cruel oppression; you must know the Spaniards better than I possibly can; there are no doubt thousands of enlightened and tolerant catholics amongst them, but the great body is swayed by priests; and if you were arrested in your flight, I tremble to think of both your fates."

"You are looking on the gloomy side of the picture, Harry," said Vernon, trying to shake off the unpleasant feeling that the words of his friend caused him. "I have good friends in both her brothers. One is constrained to be a passive witness of Ina's fate; but the other has promised me his interest; and I really think, could I get rid of the family confessor by bribery, or a promise of Ina's fortune for his convent, the difficulty would be got over."

"Well, I wish you success and happiness, Sid, with all my heart; but tell me, are you going to remain in the Spanish service; possessed of two splendid estates, heir

to an earldom, you surely will not desert old England, and settle in a foreign land?"

"No, God forbid! that feeling has passed away, my friend. I love my country, and will yet, if I am spared, return to dwell in it; but to resign my commission at this moment is utterly impossible; gratitude and honour, if I had succeeded to a principality, would prevent me."

"Well, I do not deny that there you act as I expected you would; but this will be a short struggle as far as Spain is concerned, depend on that. Whether Great Britain will have a finger in the fire, is to be seen. To-morrow—and by the way it's nearly dawn—you had better employ yourself writing to Mr. Stockdale, the late earl's solicitor and executor. We return to Cadiz the day after, and sail at once for England, so I will carry your letters myself, and send them on to their destination."

Shortly after the friends separated for the night, or rather for a couple of hours' repose, for day was breaking when our hero left the hotel, to return to the barracks.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OUR hero devoted only a short time to his letters. The one empowering Mr. Stockdale to act and transact all affairs relative to the estates left him by the Earl of Delmont, was soon despatched; he required no funds to be sent him, having much more than he wanted in the bank at Cordova. A letter to Mr. Tressidder, and one or two others were written, packed up, and the rest of the day was spent with his friend Henry.

It was with sincere and deep regret the two friends parted on the morrow. They felt all a brother's love for each other. Henry's presence had awakened all Sidney's recollections; he felt a strong inclination to behold his

native land ; not that his affection for his friend Leon was in the least lessened, or his deep, intense love for the Lady Ina De Haro, one moment forgotten ; but the past was revived in his mind, and his thoughts wandered back to many a fair scene, and many a pleasant hour under the hospitable roof of the Tressidders. However, he had little time or leisure for recollections, after the departure of his early friend, for the short tranquillity Madrid had enjoyed after the abdication of the king, was soon exchanged for tumult and disorder. He told Leon of his strange accession to fortune, but did not hint, in any way, whether he thought that circumstance would have any influence on his sister's destiny, should he attempt to offer himself to her parents as a suitor for the hand of Ina. Leon sincerely congratulated him ; but made no allusion to his sister ; he seemed deeply concerned about the state of political affairs, and expressed intense animosity against the French invaders.

Ferdinand, instigated perhaps by his hatred of Godoy, declared himself friendly to France ; and shortly after, it became known that Murat was advancing with his army to Madrid ; and to make matters worse, the king suddenly dismissed the whole body of troops, which the late events had collected around the capital. Thus the city of Madrid was actually left with only Colonel Montego's regiment of Dragoons, two infantry regiments, and a few artillery corps, under Lieutenant Valerde, a brother of the Lieutenant Valerde in our hero's regiment. Every day tumultuous meetings of the people took place ; the soldiers in garrison became gloomy and discontented ; they openly declared they were left to be massacred by the army of Murat. With great difficulty their officers kept them within their barracks.

At length, the advanced guard of the grand army, under the Duke de Berg, reached Baytrago ; and Murat himself, at the head of a brilliant staff, and a division of the Imperial guard, made a triumphal entry into Madrid, with King Ferdinand at his side.

We will not detain our readers with details of the

ridiculous mummary that took place after this public entry. Sidney Vernon and Leon De Haro were walking along the Prado, as a coach and six, preceded by running footmen, the Duke del Parque following a second equipage, passed across the Alcala. In the first coach was the sword of Francis I., which had been hanging up in the armoury ever since the battle of Pavia. The streets were thronged, the windows and balconies filled with the fairest maidens and matrons of the city.

As Vernon gazed upon the stern war-worn veterans of France, and upon the splendidly-mounted soldiers of the Imperial guard, he mentally thought, how hopeless was the contest between the Spaniard and the army of Napoleon.

What Leon thought, he kept to himself; but he looked upon the gay pageant as it passed before him with a stern brow and a pale cheek.

Before the end of the month all the royal family had quitted Madrid, except the Queen of Etruria; her brother, the infant, and the head of the regency, Don Antonio. The sending away of the royal family by the Duke de Berg, brought affairs in Madrid to a crisis. The royal carriages were on the point of departure, when the people rose in a mass, surrounded the carriages, cut the traces, and drew the vehicles back. It unfortunately chanced that an *aid-de-camp* of Murat was passing at the time; upon him the people turned, abusing and threatening him; with the flat of his sword he struck those nearest him; and from that hour commenced the struggle, that only ended by the final expulsion of the French from Spain, by the valour and skill of her British allies.

On that eventful day, one that our hero never forgot in after life, the soldiers in barracks were passing muster, and were on the point of being dismissed, when some soldiers stationed near the gates, rushed into the square, shouting, in loud, excited tones, that a French force had seized the barrack gates, barred, bolted, and locked them, taking away the keys. At the same moment were heard

repeated discharges of musketry, followed by the loud booming of cannon; between these reports, the cries, shouts, and fierce yells of an infuriated people, reached their ears. It was a remarkably gloomy, sultry day, and every sound was heard in the still air; all order and control over the excited soldiers was at an end. Several of the officers themselves caught the excitement, already exasperated at the state of affairs, and the supineness of those in power. With a wild shout of rage, the men rushed to the gates, but their massive strength and height resisted their efforts. In vain Major Doaz, assisted by Captain Vernon and Leon De Haro, implored them to be cool, to wait till a cannon could be brought to batter down the gates, and that then they might be of more service when mounted; but the men, infantry and dragoons, shouted, "They are butchering our countrymen;" and deaf to all remonstrances and threats, they fastened staples with ropes in the walls, and threw themselves over in numbers. Colonel Montego begged Major Doaz and Vernon to follow the men, and, if possible, to restrain or get them into order, while he was ordering a cannon to batter down the gates.

Our hero and Leon, being young, active, and energetic, succeeded, with some difficulty, in persuading about two hundred of the men to form into order, faithfully promising to lead them to the assistance of their countrymen.

"Down with the accursed Gaboches," was roared and yelled, and screamed on every side.

As our hero and Major Doaz proceeded through the street, every window and house-top was crowded, with men, women, and children. Every species of malediction, mingled with invocations to every saint in the calendar, was showered upon the French. As they neared the scene of contention, the musketry and cannon still dealing forth their deadly discharges, they came in contact with a Captain Larazo, a Biscayan, sword-in-hand, followed by a motly crowd, variously armed.

"Soldiers," exclaimed Captain Larazo, "in the name of God and your country, forward! The French are

mercilessly slaughtering your countrymen; they are sweeping the streets with their artillery volant."

It was a terrible sight that met the eyes of our hero, as, considerably excited, he led his promiscuous troop into the wide street of Philip the Third, leading into a large square. It was a scene of fearful and wholesale slaughter. A body of French horse were, at that moment forcing their way through a dense mass of infuriated people, armed chiefly with their long knives. In an instant, a simultaneous discharge was poured in upon the French horse, which checked them, and the people, seeing the military siding with them, gave one loud and tremendous cheer. Waving his sword, Vernon drove back the French at the first charge; but, at that moment, a formidable artillery force came full speed into the square, and immediately opened fire upon the densely packed masses of the people. Every discharge was murderous; and yet the lane, cleared by the iron shower, was instantaneously filled up by the maddened people.

Just as an artilleryman was in the act of applying his match to a heavy piece of ordnance, which was pointed at a mass of mingled human beings, a tall, strong man, who Vernon immediately recognized as his attendant Patrick, followed by a score or more of well-armed Spaniards, made a path through the ranks of artillerymen, and with a blow from the butt-end of the musket he carried, knocked over the man with the match, and shouted aloud in English—

"Hurrah! boys, let us give them a taste of their own powder."

They did not understand his words, but they did his movement. By that time, Sidney Vernon and Leon de Haro had cut their way up to the very muzzles of the artillery, and seconding Patrick's intention, they drove the men from the guns, turned them, and fired their deadly contents amidst the close ranks of a regiment of infantry, just entering the scene of action. Astounded at the unexpected discharge, the men wavered, broke, and retreated. Whilst gaining ground on the French, Lieu-

tenant Valerde of the artillery, and two or three other officers, gained the side of our hero, whose undress military coat was blackened and torn in many pieces.

"Let us make for the arsenal, Captain Vernon," said the Spanish officer—"we can force it, and provide arms and ammunition for the brave people, and drive the French from the city. Major Doaz will soon muster his men, and scour the streets."

Patrick O'Shaughnessy was in his glory; he had worked at the guns, till his face and person were begrimed with powder; getting ropes and tackle together, he encouraged the Spaniards to drag one of the guns with them to force the gates, Sidney Vernon and his troop keeping the French in check. Patrick and his gang, dragging the four-and-twenty-pounder in front, reached the arsenal, and, with a loud cheer, blazed away at the gates, which soon gave way.

Major Doaz arrived with nearly two hundred dismounted troopers, armed with carbines; but the French kept every moment increasing, coming up through the narrow streets leading to the arsenal, and firing rapid and destructive volleys upon the people in front, who were receiving the arms thrown out to them by those inside.

Vernon was by this time so disfigured by blood, dirt, and smoke, together with a slight wound, as to be scarcely recognizable. A tremendous charge of a cavalry regiment separated him from his friend de Haro. The houses on each side of the street were occupied by hundreds of fierce patriots, who hurled every kind of missile upon the French as they advanced.

"This is our last field, I fear," said Major Doaz, advancing to the side of Vernon. "You are a brave fellow, Patrick," he added, speaking to the stout-hearted Irishman, who was loading and firing with incredible activity.

"We are hemmed in, Major," said our hero, wiping the heat drops from his brow; "the great mass of the people, driven in by those French chasseurs, are doing us

more harm than good, and our men are dropping fast. I wish to God we were mounted."

"Ah!" said Major Doaz, bitterly, "this would not have been our position if the men had been firm, and obeyed orders. When the barrack gates were forced, instead of getting out the horses, they rushed, armed only with their carbines, into the city."

"Here's my last charge," shouted Patrick, ramming down his cartridge; and taking a steady aim, he brought down the officer leading a regiment of French hussars.

As he fell a tremendous shower of grape and canister from two long guns, made a lane through the mass of people, hemming in our hero and his few remaining men.

"By the powers, the Major is done, sir," said Patrick, springing forward, and lifting him his arms.

Vernon was at his side in a moment.

"This is the third and last, Vernon," said the gallant major, with a death-like smile, and, gently pressing the hand of our hero, expired.

The confusion and press at that moment was awful; the fire from the cannon and musketry incessant; while the streets, covered with the dead and dying, were slippery with blood.

"By the immortal powers, sir, they are mowing us down like daisies. Make a desperate effort, sir, and get into the next street, where they are firing from the houses."

"Have you seen Lieutenant de Haro?" asked Vernon, anxiously, as he faced a body of French with about fifty of his men.

"The Lord help us, sir, I fear, like the poor major, he's been shot down. To the right, sir—to the right—there's an opening."

As he spoke, a charge of a large body of cavalry trampled the people under foot.

Our hero and his few men had nothing to trust to but the butts of their guns; a horse-soldier strove to cut Vernon down; but strong, and still in full vigour, he knocked the trooper from his horse, while Patrick, seizing

a pistol from the holster, shot the cornet at the back of the trooper, who was aiming a blow at his master's head.

The next moment they were trampled under foot ; and as Sidney Vernon strove to struggle up, a blow from the butt-end of a heavy horse-pistol, on the back of the head, stretched him perfectly insensible amid the heap of dead and dying, that covered the entire surface of that fatal street.

How long he remained insensible he could not tell ; but when his recollection returned, he perceived he was being dragged, with several others, roughly along the ground by two French soldiers. His brain was yet confused ; but he felt himself placed on his legs, and dragged and pushed till they got him with a dozen others—some severely wounded, some dying—to the city prison, and crammed into a cell, already over-crowded with upwards of two hundred wretched individuals.

The cell was perfectly dark—stifling hot—and so full, that, with great difficulty, he contrived to seat himself, with his back against the wall.

With a strong effort of mind and body, Vernon roused himself from the lethargy he felt creeping over him ; by degrees, his thoughts and recollections returned ; he suffered from intense thirst, and the groans, lamentations, and curses of those almost packed upon him, were harrowing.

“And is this,” thought our hero, “the end I am destined to ? Oh, Ina—beloved Ina, what misery I have brought upon thy young heart.”

A loud voice, shouting a strange mixture of languages—the predominant one being English—not far from where he sat, attracted Vernon's attention ; he knew the voice at once, and with a mingled feeling of pain and pleasure, he called to his faithful attendant Patrick, who instantly made his way through the unfortunate wretches that were bitterly wailing and lamenting their miserable state, and the cruel thirst they experienced.

“Oh ! thank God, sir,” exclaimed Patrick, as he got to the side of his master. “I never expected to see you

—though, for the matter of that, by my soul, it's only by feeling I can see you at all; oh! those cursed mounseers — are you much hurt, sir?"

"I do not think I am, Patrick; but I feel great regret at your being dragged into my misfortunes."

"Oh, be gorra, sir, don't say a word about that; the dickens a one is there to howl after Patrick O'Shaughnessy, except, indeed, Pepeta might want some one to teach Spanish to. But faix, sir, we're not dead yet, thanks and glory be to God! we may yet have another shot at those cursed mounseers."

"I'm afraid not, Patrick; poor Major Doaz is gone — and alas! I fear my gallant, kind-hearted friend, de Haro also. This has been a most disastrous day."

"And that's true, sir; faix I've a gash at the back of my head you could put a pumpkin in, besides a few scratches here and there. I wish I could get your honour into a better berth, and a little taste of air — it's so hot."

As he spoke, they heard the bolts and bars drawn back, and the door thrown open. There was a rush towards the light, for several torches threw a sudden glare into the miserable cell; without the door a file of musketeers were drawn up, who instantly presented their pieces at the wretched victims within, who actually yelled for water. By the glare of the torches, Vernon recognised the torn and blackened uniform of several men of his regiment; and leaning against the wall, not far from him, were two infantry officers, and a young Spaniard, a cornet in his own regiment, looking like death.

The jailors, deaf to the cries of the suffering crowd, commenced counting them; fortunately, a French officer came in front, and looking in, said —

"Morbleu! It's as hot as — ! give them water, jailor, or they will be dead before morning."

Vernon made an effort to reach the door, intending to speak to the officer, and induce him to order the jailors to admit air, by removing the shutters against the gratings; but the officer had retired; and a small quantity

of water being given to each, the doors were again closed, and the miserable captives left to their own wretched thoughts and anticipations.

Even amid the miseries of his situation, Sidney Vernon could scarcely refrain from a smile, as the cup with the water was handed by the jailor to Patrick, who, casting a grim look at the surly official, said—

“Here’s the devil’s health to you in filthy water, and I wish there was enough of it to drown you—bad luck to ye.”

The jailor growled a curse, and shrugged his shoulders, not understanding a word addressed to him, but saying as he left the cell—

“Sacre bleu! by this time to-morrow your tongue will be quiet enough.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NIGHT of intense suffering was endured by all the captives in that wretched cell of the city prison. It was an uncommonly sultry one, and the little air entering from above, was scarcely sufficient to keep life in their exhausted frames. Several died before the jailor opened the gratings in the morning.

To close an eye in sleep Vernon found was utterly impossible, even had his body been free from wounds, or his mind from bitter retrospection. He thought but of Ina through that long night of agony. Her young heart crushed in the bud, was torture to him.

“Patrick,” said our hero, to his patient and uncomplaining follower, who sat beside him, endeavouring to keep as large a space for his master to breathe in as possible, “Patrick, should it please providence that you escape this peril, and I perish—”

"Tare and hounds, your honour," interrupted the Hibernian, "don't give up yet, they are not going to murder us in cold blood ; there will be some kind of examination of us, surely ; they will not dare to take your honour's life like a mad dog ! be gorra, if we all made a rush at the door, it would be better than die like chickens in a coup."

"Do not deceive yourself, Patrick, our doom is sealed. All within this cell will most probably be shot to death ; being English or Spanish will make no difference, for they will listen to no one ; these military executions of the French are always mere butcheries. Still, you might, or I might, by some singular chance, escape. Some turn in the affairs of this miserable country might stop these executions. If you escape, make the best of your way to Castle de Haro, see the Lady Ina, if you can ; if not, see the old Conde himself, and tell him my last thought—my last word was Ina. If you see her, alas ! she will not require being told it—but say to her—death had no sting—but in losing her."

"Lord save us ! You make a woman of me," said Patrick, "I'll do all you say, sir, but I won't believe the rascally mounseers dare put us to death in that way. Faix, I'll brain the jailor sooner than let him lay hands on me."

"Better meet your death with composure, Patrick, for resistance would be utterly useless, and only provoke more barbarous usage."

Day broke into that miserable cell slowly and faintly, not sufficient to pierce the gloom so as to enable the captives to distinguish one another. A cup of water and a square piece of black bread was served to each person, and three hours after the jailors entered backed by a file of musketeers, with fixed bayonets, and selected about fifty prisoners, tied their hands behind their backs, and marched them out of the cell.

"You are right, sir," said Patrick, in a low stern tone, "they are taken to be shot ; but by St. Patrick, they shall never shoot me till I throttle one of them, and please God a couple."

"They will be shot to death upon the Prado," said a Spaniard, near them, with a fierce execration. "They did the same at Barcelona and Tarragona; every day, a heap of dead was left, scorching and blackening in the sun's rays, till the demons got tired of their bloody work, and then they cast them all into a deep pit. Such is the doom of the Spaniard caught with arms in his hands, but God's retribution will reach them yet."

"Tare and hounds, sir, how do you feel?" said Patrick, to his master, as the second miserable morning broke, "do you feel strong enough to make a dart at the infernal devils, and not stand and be shot down like rooks."

"I'm strong enough Patrick," said Sidney calmly, "but our fellow captives have too much pride to let their enemies think they fear death, in the cause of their country's liberty."

"Lord love you, sir, we're not Spaniards; and as to pride, by me soul it's queer pride, letting a rascally Monsieur put an ounce of lead into you, it's against my conscience."

"You will only increase your sufferings, Patrick, without a shadow of success. Listen, they come for a fresh batch."

The jailors again entered, and with a stronger guard. The Spaniard looked on with a gloomy, dogged resolution, satisfied with cursing in his heart, his fierce and cruel foe. This time Sidney Vernon was selected.

With a terrible shout of violent rage, Patrick sprang upon the man binding his master's hands, and with a force that would have felled an ox, he struck him between the eyes; the man fell as if slain; while one of the musketeers, with the butt of his piece, struck the Irishman a blow upon the front of the head that stretched him senseless beside the jailor.

Vernon felt sick at heart; he made a desperate effort to free his hands, and felt the cords slacken; just at that moment he was pushed, with his fifty fellow victims, without the door, and instantly surrounded by the

musketeers, and at the point of the bayonet they were driven without the prison gates into the street. As the fresh air of Heaven passed across his heated brow, burning with the fever of excitement and rage, he strove to calm himself to meet his fate, with as stern a resolution as the Spaniards surrounding him, many of whom were marching to death as if they were only going on parade. Two young officers of his own regiment were before him, pale and ghastly, and suffering from severe wounds. Two short days before, they were pacing the gay Prado full of life and happy anticipation; and yet, now they walked with a stern front, to a cruel and unexpected death. Our hero resolved to confront the grim enemy with a bold face, but it was a severe struggle. There are few, very few perhaps—let them think what they may—who can walk calmly and unshrinkingly to their last scene in life even in advanced years, much less in youth. We have examples it is true, in our own history, how the noble heart has met death upon the scaffold, with a calm, unruffled brow; still there are few, out of the millions, capable of exerting such influence over their feelings. Sidney Vernon was not yet three-and-twenty, with the prospect a few days back of years of life, perhaps of happiness, full of health and strength; but now, in a brief space, he would be a mass of senseless clay; feel this he did deeply and acutely—despite all his nerve and fortitude. He knew there was no chance whatever; the fact of his being an officer of the ——— dragoons would be a triumph to the French; for the ——— dragoons were detested by the officers of Murat's army, for the terrible havoc they made amongst the infantry regiments at Burgos, and other places. Knowing, therefore, that his fate was certain, he summoned his fortitude to his aid, prayed for forgiveness to a merciful Providence, and walked boldly and firmly beside the haughty Spaniard next to him.

Not a citizen or Spaniard of any kind was to be seen; the casements of the windows were all closed, leading to the Prado—the fatal Prado of Madrid, and all the streets

leading to this favorite resort of the inhabitants were lined with French troops, standing in stern repose. it was a memorable and dreadful day, this 23rd of June,* and was long remembered.

During the preceding night successive thunder storms of terrible violence broke over the city, threatening to hurl its massive palaces upon the heads of its treacherous invaders. Towards morning a furious tempest of wind arose, doing immense damage to the loftiest buildings. There was a short lull as the miserable victims came forth from the prison, but as they approached the Prado, the rain came down in torrents, and the thunder, louder than whole parks of artillery, pealed over the city.

As the mournful procession entered the streets of the Alcala, that gay promenade leading to the Prado, Sidney Vernon perceived that all the fronts of the palaces and mansions were closed—not a soul was to be seen at any of the windows. The rain ceased; but the heavens seemed like a vast pall stretched over the city. A profound stillness suddenly succeeded to the awful din of heaven's artillery, broken only by the measured tramp of the troops that marched on each side of the victims. From the Alcala they entered the Prado, which crosses it at right angles, and has a gradual ascent from the Puerta Del Sol, widening as it approaches the Prado. The Spaniards boast, that the street of the Alcala is the handsomest in Europe—on each side are the palaces of the nobility and the Grandees—many churches and convents, and at the summit, the Triumphal arch of the Alcala.

As they entered the Prado, Sidney Vernon raised his eyes and gazed over the scene before him. The whole space was filled with upwards of six thousand soldiers of the French army, drawn up in military parade, to witness the cowardly and inhuman butchery of a few gallant patriots. Everywhere the obnoxious eagle reared itself amid the ranks. One side of the Prado was composed

* April was the month in which these massacres took place.

of palaces and gardens, the other by the railings of the Ritreo. Just opposite to the figure of Neptune, the condemned were halted.*

In stern and haughty composure, the victims of Murat's cruelty allowed themselves to be placed in the desired position; they bent their gaze, first over their beloved Prado; and then upon the merciless invaders of their country. Whatever their feelings were, they mastered them nobly, for not a groan or a murmur rose from amongst them. At that moment, like a giant refreshed, the storm re-commenced; crash after crash of thunder rattled unceasingly over their heads; the lightning seemed as if it ran along the very bayonets of the French infantry, and to linger on the railings of the Ritreo; then down came the rain in a mighty deluge, while the trees of the Ritreo bent and quivered, and seemed as if they would be torn up by the roots, by the mighty blast that swept with a wild uproar over the Prado.

"Thus, then," mentally soliloquized our hero, as he beheld the party selected to commit those cruel murders march out from the ranks. "Thus then end the hopes, the schemes, and dreams of the future, on the brink of eternity; to God I commend my soul! Ina! beloved Ina! We meet no more on earth!"

The fatal word was given, a long stream of fire ran along the line, simultaneously with a peal of thunder that struck a panic in the hearts of many, and so vivid was the flash before it, that it half-blinded many of the men. Most of the victims of oppression were stretched lifeless, but a few still struggled and rolled over in agony. A party was ordered to finish those that still existed, which was done with the musket and bayonet, and then the men fell into rank; the notes of the bugle were heard in the pauses of the storm, and the troops began

* A monument now stands on that same spot, to commemorate those frightful murders committed by the order of Murat. How little did the tyrant imagine that he himself would, in a few short years, be shot to death as a traitor, on the very land over which he had ruled as a king.

to file off, and finally marched from the fatal spot, drenched under a deluge of rain. What they felt or thought we know not, but dearly in the end did these merciless invaders pay for those terrible and cold-blooded murders.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHILE the events recorded in our last few chapters were taking place, the Earl of Delmont and his countess were thrown into a state of great excitement, if not consternation, by two most unlooked-for and unexpected occurrences.

Always cold and haughty in manner and appearance, the Earl, after succeeding to the title and estate, became gloomy and infinitely more reserved; subject, at times, to fits of great despondency. To divert his mind, and probably seeking employment, he fixed his residence at Delmont, and commenced adding to and embellishing the building, and laying out the grounds in the Italian style.

Sweet Mary Vernon had many distinguished suitors, but notwithstanding all her father could say, she kept her faith and love for the absent sailor. Some short time after the insurrection at Madrid, she received a letter from Mary Tressidder, enclosing one from Henry, dated Plymouth. Henry described his meeting with Vernon, at Madrid, and how amazed he was at finding his dearest friend transformed into a dashing Dragoon in the Spanish service.

"I must now, my dear Mary," continued the young lieutenant, in his letter, "write to you on a subject that pains me: we have spoken of it before, but only in a

casual way, and merely in reply to an observation you made as to the strange kind of feeling you always experienced for your little brother; blaming yourself for a want of affection for him for no earthly reason that you could see. It is now explained. That boy is no brother of yours! I see your dear face turn pale as you read this, but, believe me, my love, I would not make this assertion without being thoroughly convinced of its accuracy. I write you this disagreeable piece of intelligence for several reasons. I cannot bear that disgrace should fall upon the parents of her I love. Neither could I, in conscience, bear to see my beloved friend Sidney robbed of his inheritance and title by the son of an Italian felon."

"Oh, Heavens! I can see it all now," mentally muttered Mary Vernon, as she paused, and let those soft loving eyes rest upon the floor. "I suspect the father and mother of the boy; my imagination was always hunting for some resemblance, some memory of one I had seen and known, whenever I looked into that child's face. Alas! this is terrible, this has been done from the hatred, the unaccountable hatred, my father always experienced for my poor cousin, and for his father before him; but what is to be done?" and again she resumed the reading.

"I have not breathed a word of this sad tale, dear Mary, to any being but yourself. Sidney will not move a step in this affair while your father lives; but I think differently with him—he may, God forbid that such should be the case, but as a soldier engaged in a furious war, he may be cut off; and are we, if we live, to see this false heir become Earl of Delmont?

"You may remember, Mary, when in Naples, some four or five years ago, an Italian and his wife living with your father; this man's name was Goldoni; it was he who sold the boy to your father. Sidney, by a singular chance, encountered this man and his wife, in Naples; the wife, herself, in a transport of grief, confessed to the fact of having allowed her child to be sold, an act she

bitterly repented. This wretched woman was found murdered the next day, by her miscreant of a husband, he, himself, eluding all search; but depend on it, this ruffian will yet be found—he had recently escaped from the galleys. I thought it better to be the first person to make this intelligence known to you, as the shock will be less felt, when it does come, as come it will. We are ordered to Cadiz again, and sail to-morrow.”

After reading this letter, which she did twice over, Mary Vernon remained in a deep reverie. She was recalling scenes and persons that, until the receipt of Henry's letter, had escaped her memory; as she did so, the whole affair of the false heir came clear and distinct to her mind, and not one single doubt of the fact remained. But how this was to end, perplexed and rendered her truly unhappy. Her father's change of manner, the fits of gloomy abstraction, the restlessness that marked his actions, had not escaped her observation; her mother, too, seemed to exert herself to humour her husband more than ever. She had always studied his temper and disposition; but latterly much more so. Mary had always remarked that her father never, by any chance, fondled or caressed his heir. In fact, he rarely noticed him; but having never observed him with children—as she was the youngest herself—she did not impute it to any other cause than a dislike to unbend from his natural reserve of manner, even to his own child.

Her mother was, at times, kind enough to the little boy, who was, in reality, a fine healthy child, but of a passionate, headstrong temper; and at other times, she could not bear him to be brought near her. She remembered, too, that not a single servant went with them to the Continent; her mother declaring that she could not bear English domestics in a foreign country. In Paris several French servants were engaged; and in Florence it was that Goldoni and his wife, then recently married, were engaged.

On arriving at Naples, Lady Vernon complained that

she could not bear the noise and bustle of the city, and removed into a villa at a short distance, with Goldoni and his wife, and three Neapolitan domestics ; and there the birth of the young heir was declared to have taken place.

About two months after, Goldoni and his wife retired from service, and left Naples, as they said, for Florence, where they intended to settle on a small farm left them by a relative.

No part of these proceedings struck Mary Vernon or her sisters with much surprise, though they knew that their mother was fond of society and display ; yet her situation, at a rather advanced period of life, sufficiently accounted for her seclusion. Returning to England, all the servants were discharged in Paris, and the old domestics left at Vernon Hall resumed their places.

Such were Mary Vernon's recollections of the period they spent on the Continent.

The earl had only been home a few days, after an absence of some weeks in London, attending his Parliamentary duties, when late one evening he entered the drawing-room, where the Countess and Mary were seated ; his countenance was extremely flushed, and evidently greatly agitated ; he threw himself into a chair, striving to appear calm.

"I have had letters from abroad," he said, addressing Lady Vernon, "and there is every reason to believe that my misguided nephew has been killed during the insurrection at Madrid."

Mary Vernon fell back in her chair pale as death, with an exclamation of so serious a sorrow, that the Earl paused, looking at his daughter with a stern gaze of intense surprise. Tears were in the affectionate girl's eyes ; but she made a great effort to calm her agitation.

"You seem strangely affected, Mary," said her father, in a bitter tone, "you never even saw this unfortunate and misguided young man."

"No, sir," replied poor Mary, in a faltering tone ; "you cannot expect but that I should feel my cousin's untimely

fate, even though I never saw him; but, dear father, I trust this intelligence is only a rumour?"

"It certainly is a very sudden and melancholy termination to my nephew's career," said Lady Vernon, with some show of emotion in her manner and tone; "how did it occur? and is it positively ascertained?"

Lady Vernon looked almost as pale as her daughter, and there was no concealing the agitation she experienced.

The Earl gazed from one to the other thoughtfully; he had quite recovered his usual manner, and, after a pause of a few moments, he said—

"There has been an insurrection at Madrid; the people rose in a mass, and were joined by the two or three regiments then in garrison. Murat, the day before, had marched several regiments and two corps of artillery into the city, and a complete slaughter of the people took place. The infantry and dragoon regiments, which rashly sided with the people, were cut to pieces; not an officer, except their colonel and a captain, escaped, with some forty or fifty men, who contrived to cut their way out through one of the gates. Such is the account transmitted to our government. My nephew was a captain in the dragoon regiment—so Sir Edward, the envoy to Madrid, informed me, for he saw him in that city several times; he particularly mentioned seeing him at a great *fete* given by a Spanish grandee, a few days previous to this insurrection. He was pointed out to him by young Tressidder, who accompanied Sir Edward — to Madrid; so there can be no mistake. How he became a captain in so distinguished a regiment, where all the officers were sons of the highest nobility of Spain, I cannot say. But, Sir Edward — assures me, there is no doubt but that the unfortunate young man was slain in the streets."

"Good God! what an untimely end for the young, the true-hearted, and the brave! for such I know my poor cousin was," murmured Mary to herself, as she rose from her chair, and retired to her room to give vent

to the tears that would flow, notwithstanding her efforts to appear calm before her father.

"I see," said the Earl, after his daughter had left the room, "that Mary takes an evident interest in Sidney Vernon's fate. She must have been taught that feeling by young Tressidder; she has refused several highly advantageous alliances, and is determined to keep faith with this young lieutenant—a pretty match for an Earl's daughter; but my consent shall never be given. When of age, if she will disobey her parents, and marry this man, I will discard her—not a fraction shall she ever receive from me."

"Henry Tressidder," said Lady Vernon, with whom the young sailor was rather a favourite, "is a young man belonging to one of the best families in Cornwall, and not dependant on his profession; his brother William, with his father's consent, having given up to him the property of Tregarron, worth fully five hundred a year, on his attaining his twenty-first year. His oldest sister has married a baronet, whose family is as old as any in the kingdom; therefore, my dear William," continued Lady Vernon, "I do not see why, now, you should be so resolved against an union you formerly made no objection to. Mary is very young—there is no knowing what is in the womb of time. I must confess this unexpected and miserable end of Mr. Vernon distresses me. You know I never felt any aversion towards him, and, indeed, I deplore the course we have pursued."

"Perhaps, so do I, Ellen," said the Earl, thoughtfully, and with an expression of sadness in his features; but he added, looking up with a stern frown, "but I will pursue it to the end. However, here ends the foolish prophecy that first led to a disagreement between my brother and myself, and which, in after years, embittered my existence."

Lady Vernon looked surprised, saying—

"I never heard of any prophecy; was it one of those old family legends attached to most old families?"

"No, Ellen, it was not. The incident I speak of oc-

curred in Vernon Park, when my brother and I were very young men ; there was only sixteen months between our ages. We were shooting in the preserves, when suddenly we came upon two female gipsies—one old, the other young ; they had each a bag at their back ; the one the elder carried seemed to have something in it. I suspected at once they had been snaring pheasants, and that there must be a gang of them somewhere in the woods. I detested these people, arrant rogues and vagabonds as they are ; and I stopped them, desiring them to open their bags, and let me see the contents. While speaking to the elder, the younger—certainly a very pretty girl, of seventeen or eighteen years of age, with dark, piercing eyes, and long black tresses—whispered something to my brother ; he stepped up to me, and laying his hand upon my arm, said, in a laughing, jesting tone, ‘ Let them be, William, they promise never to come here again ; and this pretty lass says she will tell us our fortunes, and I have a great fancy to hear mine.’ I said ‘ nonsense ;’ but he over-ruled me ; and shall I confess it ? I was weak enough to feel a wish to hear what they would say. My brother would only listen to his fortune from the young one’s lips ; but I selected the old beldame. After the usual ceremonies and humbug, she said, shaking her head, ‘ You have fortune enough ; you will be a great lord yet, but you will never have an heir.’ I gave the old crone a crown, and told her to beware of ever being caught on the grounds again. ‘ You will never see me again,’ said she, with a bitter laugh ; ‘ but you won’t forget me.’

“ The young gipsey, after looking into my brother’s face, said, with a serious tone, ‘ You will be fortunate and unfortunate in life. Nevertheless, you will have an heir who will wear an earl’s coronet.’ My brother laughed gaily, gave the girl a half-guinea, saying : ‘ I will have a kiss from those tempting lips, at all events, for my money.’

“ Now, Ellen, was it not strange that a man endowed with reason, blessed with a sound education, should allow the idle words of those miserable vagrants to dwell in his memory ?—and yet they did. I do not think my

brother ever once alluded to them ; and yet, insensibly, a coldness sprang up between us—at all events it did so on my part. Years rolled on, we became next heirs to the Earldom of Delmont. My brother entered into the mercantile profession, married, and had several children. With me, the birth of every girl, as you know, Ellen, embittered my existence.

“I continually thought of the gipsey’s prophecy—it never left my mind ; I that prided myself upon my reason and philosophy. When my brother lost his wife and all his children, except one son, and then became bankrupt in fortune, the accursed prophecy everlastingly occurred to me.

“I need say no more ; I feel remorse for the past ; I do not deny it. I have been ill, while in London ; one or two slight symptoms of blood to the head ; in fact, any excitement causes unpleasant feelings, and I wish to avoid them ; a little quiet will bring me round. I was harsh to poor Mary ; she is a kind-hearted, noble girl.”

After a pause, during which Lady Vernon remained in deep and sad thought.

“I do not believe my nephew was killed, as you have heard,” she said. “It may be a false rumour, and I trust in God it is, William !”

The earl started, changed colour, saying, with a sickly smile ; “Are you, too, superstitious, Ellen ? has that abominable prophecy had its effect on you ?”

“Perhaps it has,” returned Lady Vernon, quietly ; “but not as a prophecy ; for I have no belief in such trash ; such impious daring to attempt to foretel what only is known to a merciful Providence ! but it has this effect on me ; it shows how even the strongest mind may be worked upon by the weakest means. You despised the words of those ignorant outcasts, and yet you let them haunt your mind ; their prophecy, if you look into it, was nothing more than the usual cant of those people ; they knew well who you were ; it was entirely useless to promise you fortune, as you already had it ; therefore, they predicted greatness. You offended them, by being

harsh ; and your brother pleased by praising the young one's beauty ! Why it affects me, is simply thus. It has, I now perceive, blighted our whole lives, and caused you to do that which, in your heart, you deplore ; it changed your disposition, temper, feelings—your whole life has been affected by it ; with all your reasoning faculties and understanding, superstition held its sway in your mind. Providence works its will by strange and, to us, sometimes, incomprehensible means ! It is not that those wandering vagrants thought one minute about their jargon ; but their words poisoned your mind. We have committed a sin—not too late, I trust, to be atoned ; for I firmly believe our nephew still exists, and that Providence will not permit crime to flourish with impunity.”

“And what would you do ?” said the Earl, after a moment's thought.

“Go on the Continent ; restore, if possible, the child to its parents, with ample means for its future support ; and if the parents cannot be found, still provide for it ; but let an announcement of its death be made public.”

“Ah,” said the Earl, “though your intention is good, still it is deception, and might be the means of much humiliation, and finally disgrace. Things must remain as they are. My nephew is assuredly dead. He was known to have headed the soldiers in the insurrection, along with a Major Doaz, who was also shot. Besides, by order of Murat, all the prisoners taken in arms were shot to death ; so that if he escaped being killed during the conflict, he would have met the same fate as those taken in arms.”

Lady Vernon sighed ; for with all her haughtiness of manner, she really possessed a kind and a feeling heart. The act she had been induced to commit, embittered her past life, and to the future she looked with gloomy apprehension.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MONTH passed at Delmont Castle, without anything interrupting the quiet routine of the establishment. The Earl was not well ; still he did not complain ; he superintended the improvements, and daily took horse exercise ; no visitors were invited, and but a few visits made to the mansions of the neighbouring gentry. One morning, the Earl remained in his library, having complained the night before of an unpleasant sensation about the head ; but by his physician's advice, he took some remedies and omitted his customary ride. The Earl was reading, when his confidential valet entered, with several letters, laying them on the table beside his master, and retired.

The earl put down his book, and cast a glance over the addresses—one in particular attracted his attention, and he took it up, and, as men will do, though it is singular they should, examined the hand-writing, and then the seal, both strange to him, and wondered who the writer was, when by breaking the seal curiosity would at once be satisfied.

The direction was in a bold, careless style, evidently foreign ; the earl broke the seal, with a somewhat unsteady hand, and gazed at the contents. It was in the Italian language. He sought the writer's name ; and as he beheld it, started from his chair, with an exclamation of intense vexation ; his face, before very pale, became flushed to the colour of blood—he put his hand to his forehead, staggered back, made an effort to reach the bell, and with an exclamation of—"God pardon me !" fell on his face, and there lay, without the slightest perceptible motion.

The heavy fall attracted attention in the room below, and the earl's man rushed up-stairs to the library : his horror was great, when he beheld his master lying motionless before him ; he pulled the bell, till it broke, and

stooped down, and raised the earl's head ; but life was extinct. By this time, the whole mansion was alarmed ; a groom was ordered off for the family physician ; Lady Vernon went from one fainting fit into another—while poor Mary, horrified by her father's death, and her mother's convulsions, was almost bereft of reason. The doctor arrived, but his visit was only to proclaim that the earl had expired from apoplexy.

Turning from this scene of human sorrow and suffering, we request our readers to accompany us into a chamber in a house of wretched appearance ; in one of the back streets in the gay and flourishing City of Bath, from which Delmont Castle was some four or five miles distant.

The chamber was as wretched in its formation and furniture as the outward appearance of the house—a lodging house of the lowest description—a table, two chairs, and a miserable straw mattress, comprised its furniture. On the table, which was as dirty as it could well be, were the remains of a loaf, and a broken bowl containing milk ; and seated, partaking of this fare, the morning after the earl of Delmont's death, was a most wretched-looking individual—still there was evidence remaining to show that he had once been a strong, tall man, with well-formed features, but most sinister-looking eyes, his age not more than four or five and thirty ; but the emaciated, worn appearance of his features gave him the look of fifty ; his garments were worn threadbare, and his dark, lank hair hung almost down upon his shoulders. His very dark complexion, manner, and entire deportment, proclaimed this individual to be a foreigner. With a grim smile he took up the piece of bread, and turned it round and round, exclaiming half aloud in Italian—

“Sumptuous fare !—hunger and thirst must, however, be appeased—I have tasted nothing for four and twenty hours—my last pence went to purchase a sheet of paper, pen, and ink—this bread and milk I begged ;” he laughed aloud—it was a horrid laugh—for his fierce eyes glared

—and he pushed back his dark-matted hair with his thin, wasted hand, as he kept muttering to himself, sundry strange sentences; “But to-morrow—aye, to-night—I will sup like a prince!” and again he laughed, rubbed his hands—and having finished the bread and milk, got up, and placing the skeleton of a hat upon his head, left the room, descended the crazy stairs, and was walking out through the filthy passage, when an old, miserable-looking woman hobbled up to him, holding out her skinny hand, and looking up into his face, said—

“Tip, my man—it’s my custom to be paid by my lodgers before they leave in the morning.”

“Tip,” repeated the man, distinctly enough, though in a foreign accent; and then, with a hideous grin, took off his skeleton hat, and made the old woman a bow, and walked on.

She screamed, robber and thief, after him, till she was hoarse, in which cry a lot of young children joined in high glee.

There were no police in those days, loitering about the streets, peeping into windows, and looking slyly down areas; and nobody thought it worth while to stop the wretched-looking stranger, with the half-starved face, as he shuffled along in a miserable pair of shoes, heelless and toeless. He made his way to the post-office, and knocked at the window—the slide fell back, and the post-master started with astonishment at the wild, famished-looking individual before him.

In tolerable English, he asked if there was a letter for a person of the name of Goldoni?

“Humph—Goldoni,” repeated the post-master, looking over the letter G. “None.”

And bang went the slide into its place.

“None!” gasped the Italian—“none!” and then, with a fierce oath, he clenched his hand, muttering, in his native tongue—“Does he despise my power? *Corpo de Bacco*,” and he ground his teeth with rage—“I will show him that the power is with me.”

As he spoke, two gentlemen approached the post-office

from different directions. On meeting, one of them held out his hand to the other, saying—

“Ha! doctor! how are you? Detestable weather, eh!”

There was a slight drizzle.

“Oh! pretty well—we can’t complain—long run of dry weather.”

“By the bye,” said the first speaker, “you have lost your noble patient! Very sudden death, that of the Earl of Delmont, eh?”

“Like most cases of apoplexy.”

As the doctor spoke, he felt his arm grasped by some one behind; turning round, he beheld the cadaverous face of the Italian, Goldoni.

“Eh! fellow, what do you mean by this insolence?”

“Did you say my Lord Delmont was dead?” said the Italian, with breathless eagerness, and as humbly as his fierce nature would let him.

“Dead!” repeated the surprised doctor, and then added, seeing the miserably starved look of the Italian—“yes—he died yesterday—and you will do the same, if you do not get food. There, go and buy bread.”

And the doctor put a half-crown in the man’s hand, and hurried after his friend.

The Italian clutched the half-crown, with a nervous eagerness, and gazed after the really kind-hearted physician; and then drew a long breath.

“This will save me,” he muttered. “I can live a week upon this; and before that I will work upon the conscience of my lady; the game is in my hands yet.”

He was turning away, when he beheld a man, habited in mourning, approaching the post-office, holding a letter in his hand; he was a very respectable looking-individual, but though dressed strictly in the English mode, had something of the foreigner in his look and manner—so much so, that Goldoni, as he passed him, looked him steadily in the face—whilst the man in black looked fixedly at the Italian—stopped,—hesitated,—gazed at the letter in his hand—and then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, turned sharp round, and walked after

the Italian, who was not aware that he was followed. When close up with the Italian, seeing no one very near, he exclaimed—

“Goldoni!”

With a start of surprise and fear, the Italian turned and gazed at the speaker with a fierce though doubtful look.

“So,” said the stranger, speaking in Italian, “I am right. Be not afraid, amico—you and I shall soon be bosom friends—you are Luigi Goldoni, that’s certain!”

Though surprised, and perhaps a little frightened, the Indian said—

“I see you are a countryman; nevertheless, you may be mistaken as to my name.”

“No,” said the other, confidently; “look, there it is.”

And he showed him the back of the letter he held in his hand—“Mr. L. Goldoni, Post-office, Bath.”

“Well,” said the startled Italian, with a sneer; “what’s that to me.”

“Nothing now,” said the man in black, thrusting the letter into his pocket.

“Listen, amico. You expected a letter from the late Earl of Delmont—eh? Ha! you understand me now. Your name is Goldoni! Now, move on—for people are coming. You and I must become friends—for I know your secret.”

Goldoni staggered and leaned against the wall.

“You are frightening yourself,” he continued. “Take this,” and pulling out a purse from his pocket, and putting it into the Italian’s hand, whose fingers closed convulsively on it. “Go to Duke Street—you can there purchase decent cast-off wearing apparel—suit yourself—then go and lodge at a small, but good inn, called the ‘Greyhound,’ in Globe Alley, and wait there till I come to you. Do you understand me?”

“Perfectly,” returned the now re-assured Italian, though still in a state of great surprise; but thinking that his countryman was acting according to the orders of Lady Vernon, who had doubtless read his letter.

"Well," continued the stranger, "I am glad we understand one another. Remember the Greyhound, Globe Alley—I may not be able to come to-night—but certainly to-morrow. Adio."

And without another word or look, the man walked rapidly away.

"Bonissimo!" muttered Goldoni, rubbing his withered hands, "my luck changes." And turning a corner, into a deserted lane, he took out the purse, and looked at its contents. "Ha! St. Nicholas! This is something—three gold guineas, and two pound notes, and some silver."

Enquiring the way, he reached Duke Street, where several Jews kept old clothes and sundry other things.

When the wretched-looking Italian walked into the first shop, the Jew-owner gazed at him from head to foot, with a sneer, saying—

"Good morning, friend, what can I do to serve your worship?"

The Italian paid little heed to the enquiry, till he had selected an entire suit of tolerably good garments of dark brown.

"How much?" said Goldoni, in his harsh, fierce tone, which startled the Jew, who replied, using the long-winded jargon of his trade, by demanding three guineas, and finally taking one half. Purchasing a handkerchief and then a hat, he packed the garments in the former, and putting the latter on his head, paid the money, and walked out into the street.

The Jew looked at the guinea and a half—tested them, and then said:

"Dat be one d——d teif, or I'm no Jew!"

Goldoni next purchased a pair of shoes and stockings, and then proceeded to find his way back to the place where he had passed the preceding night. The old woman, when she beheld her run-away lodger, set up a torrent of invectives, which he at once stopped by handing her a sixpence, for which she literally gave the same quantity of blessings.

Mounting to his miserable room, he changed his dress, and altered his appearance as much as possible ; presenting the old woman, as he left the house, with the rags he had taken off—a valuable legacy. A barber was next visited, and, finally, giving a little boy a penny, he found his way to the Greyhound—a comfortable, retired, third-rate inn, mostly frequented by carriers. There he ordered a bed, and, what he more eagerly desired, a dinner ; and there we leave him for a time, retracing our steps to Delmont Castle.

In order to give our readers some account of the personage, who had thus provided Luigi Goldoni with food, raiment, and lodging, our readers must remember that the late Earl of Delmont, after reading the name of Goldoni, at the bottom of the letter he had taken from the table, from excitement, and probably, previous pre-disposition, was seized with apoplexy, causing immediate death. When his valet rushed into the room, and beheld his master lifeless on the floor, his eyes rested on the open letter ; in an instant he saw that it was in Italian, and he also saw at the bottom the name of Goldoni ; seizing the paper, he thrust it into his pocket, and then gave the alarm. The name of this valet was George Salvati ; his father and mother were both Italians, who had lived many years with the previous Earl of Delmont—the wife as housekeeper, the husband as valet—they had but one child, George Salvati. On the death of the Earl, the father and mother had been handsomely pensioned.

Some five years before that event, the son, after travelling abroad with a nobleman—whom he quitted of his own account—entered the service of Sir Christopher Vernon as confidential valet. Now this man was not a dishonest man, in the common acceptance of the word, that is, you might leave a thousand pounds, without counting them, in his way, and he would not touch one ; neither would he take a *douceur* from a tradesman, in order that the said tradesman might charge his master an extra two per cent. entry for his goods ; but George

Salvati, though born in England, was possessed of all the Italian love of intriguing and plotting, united with a most ardent curiosity. If he thought he could advance his fortune by any intrigue or scheme requiring cleverness and dexterity he would jump at it, and follow it up, however nefarious in its operations. He was a good-looking, and exceedingly intelligent man for his class; but as we have said, he was very curious, and had an ardent desire to know all the secrets of the families he lived with, provided they had secrets; and heaven knows there is scarcely a family without them.

When Sir Christopher Vernon went abroad, it excited in George Salvati's mind the greatest astonishment, that he and all the servants should be left behind; *his* services being dispensed with, was absolutely annoying. But Sir Christopher having appointed him steward over the Vernon Hall Estate, during his absence, and as he was attached to a farmer's daughter, in the vicinity of Southampton, he bore his master's absence remarkably well.

When the news reached Vernon Hall, of the birth of an heir to the Vernon estates, the valet, although extremely proud of the effect his native climate had had on Lady Vernon's constitution, could not exactly understand the matter; in fact, an undefined something crossed his mind, which he could scarcely comprehend, but the ideas slumbered, and on the return of the family, he resumed his duties about the person of the baronet, more as a kind of secretary than a valet—often writing letters which the baronet dictated; for he had had a really good and sound education.

Six months had not elapsed ere Salvati perceived that there was a secret. Sir Christopher was more reserved and cold in manner, Lady Vernon more thoughtful, and at times melancholy.

George Salvati was puzzled; he perceived that the baronet never fondled his young heir, nor did Lady Vernon bestow much maternal fondness upon her child—but then again, he thought the lady's age was not

exactly one for nursing and fondling. There was that, too, in the child's complexion, which Salvati could not exactly make out; and though the truth never struck him, still he was convinced there was a secret—to which accident gave him a clue.

Sir Christopher, on the day after his becoming Earl of Delmont, summoned George Salvati into his study, and pointing to three or four letters lying on the table, in his own writing—but from agitation or some indisposition very illegibly written—told him to copy, direct, and send them off by post. The servant sat down and commenced his task, the Earl walking about the room; just then Lady Vernon opened the door and looking in said—

“Mr. Heartwell wishes to see you for a moment.”

The Earl left the library.

Lying within a few inches of George Salvati was a letter, partly open, though only two or three lines were exposed; he happened to look at it, and was attracted by its being in Italian; he did not touch it—but he let his gaze rest on the three lines he could read; they were simply as follows :

“Possible to trace—Goldoni, who escaped from
——— must have helped his wife also to escape from
the lunatic ———”

That was all he could decipher; touch the letter he would not—indeed he had no time, for the Earl returned immediately. The letters were written, directed, and posted, and the amanuensis was left to puzzle his wits about the sentences he had read—there was not much in them; nevertheless the name of Goldoni haunted his memory—there was evidently a connection between the Earl and some one of that name. On coming to the title, the Earl employed a secretary, and although George Salvati's salary was doubled, he was miserable; he could make nothing out of the little he had discovered, and yet still he felt satisfied that when in Italy

his master had had some kind of dealings with a man and his wife, who were called Goldoni. Suddenly, like a flash of light, the heir entered his head; he had always considered it somewhat strange, that Lady Vernon should have a son—seventeen years after the birth of her last child, and at so advanced a period of life.

“Could they have purchased the child while in Naples?” he said to himself. Then came the recollection that the baronet had not taken a single servant to the continent with him, nor brought one back, except a nurse-maid hired in Paris. This induced him to examine the boy attentively; and watching every trifling circumstance, he became fully satisfied in his own mind he had made a grand discovery. But how to prove it, and how to profit by this great effort of his genius, distracted him; therefore it was no wonder, when, on lifting his dead master, his quick eye caught sight of the name of Goldoni, in an open letter, that he should eagerly seize it, put it into his pocket, and on retiring for the night, having locked his door and trimmed his candle, proceeded eagerly to read it, first observing that it had been posted at the Bath post-office, was written in a good hand, and in Italian, as follows:

“MY LORD,

“After enduring incredible sufferings, I have reached this country in rags, starving, and destitute. I do not accuse your lordship as being the cause of my misfortunes, but when I wrote to you, you could have saved me by the sacrifice of a small sum of money; my wife, the mother of the child you call son, was sent to a lunatic asylum, though by no means mad. That asylum was visited by an English nobleman—the very Earl of Delmont, to whose estates you have succeeded. This gentleman became interested for my wife, and it seems in her ravings—for the confinement actually affected her mind—she declared she had sold her child to an Englishman of the name of Vernon. Now it happened that I had planned and effected her escape that

night, and when the same milor came with a doctor the next day, to examine into the state of the woman who had made this strange declaration, she was not to be found. Not long after she died.

"I determined to come to England; after innumerable hardships, and having been hunted through Italy, I worked my way here; after three weeks' search, I learned you had become Earl of Delmont. Now, my lord, I tell you I am *starving and desperate*—I must have money to carry me to America, and to support myself there for a time. After this, I will no more trouble your lordship. A line addressed to the post-office, Bath, in my own name, will find me obedient to your wishes; I must request an immediate answer—I have not the means of buying a loaf of bread, or of procuring a night's lodging; another day will drive me to despair.

"I remain your lordship's

"Devoted servant,

"LUGI GOLDONI."

"So, this is the secret," soliloquized the valet, drawing his breath, and looking round the room. "Just as I thought—but this is proof. I consider this letter worth ten thousand pounds, every shilling; but I must get this ruffian off to America as cheap as I can—say a thousand!" The valet measured, and thought, and calculated all the probabilities of his scheme as composedly as if engaged in a mercantile speculation; he did not bestow one thought upon the other characters in the plot, in which he was to be the chief actor. His first determination was to get a personal interview with Goldoni. We have seen how he accomplished that purpose, rendered much more easy by stumbling upon Goldoni in the manner related.

Leaving him to carry out his project, in the success of which he felt so confident, we return in our next chapter to the fatal Prado of Madrid.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN the terrible word "Fire" was given to the men drawn up to execute the cruel sentence of Murat, upon all persons found with arms in their hands, Sidney Vernon felt a ball strike him in the shoulder; he only felt that one, though many others grazed his person; he staggered, and the man next him being mortally wounded, bore him in his fall to the ground, across his body, with his bleeding throat direct upon his face; his recollection did not for a moment desert him; and strange, at such a time, a feeling of hope stole over him. He made no effort to dislodge the body that lay upon him, he even permitted the blood to flow freely over his face, closing his eyes and mouth, and breathing gently through his nostrils; he knew well what was to follow. The cries and groans of his tortured companions, many only slightly wounded, pierced his heart; he heard the tramp of soldiers advancing to shoot and bayonet those that showed signs of life! What a moment of torture—a whole life of agony compressed into a minute of time; he heard the shots and stabs—he held his breath—he knew he must present a ghastly appearance from the blood flowing over his face and person; shot followed shot—a stifled cry of agony, and the tramp of feet passed on; but the howl of the storm overhead was heard. Then came the notes of the bugle, distinct and clear—the troops were forming to leave the Prado. Merciful Providence! he was left untouched, alive, the only one amid a pile of dead! Down came the rain in torrents, a perfect deluge, washing the blood from his lips, and moistening his parched tongue.

The thoughts of Sidney Vernon at that moment were so conflicting, so confused, so mingled with agony and blessed hope, that in after times he had no power to recall them. At length he began to feel the weight of

the dead Spaniard almost suffocating him, but yet he dared not attempt to stir; gradually the intense pressure on his brain subsided, and he felt a divine hope steal over his soul; for when the power of fully recollecting all things came back to him, he became aware that the bodies would remain where they were during the night, and two following days, till fresh victims were added, and then the entire would be carted to a certain spot, and thrown into a great pit. Sentinels were posted day and night at all the avenues leading into the Prado, some at considerable distances from the bodies.

It struck our hero that during the night he might possibly escape, unperceived, to the railings of the Ritreo, and lie there till dawn. His left shoulder was excessively painful, and a ball having struck the fleshy part of his leg, also gave him considerable uneasiness. At length he ventured to unclothe his eyes, the storm had passed over, and a singular silence seemed to reign over the place where he lay. He shuddered as his gaze rested on the distorted, agonized features of his dead comrades. He could distinctly hear the hum of human voices in the distance, and the bells of the churches as they rung for evening prayers. The sun had set, and a feeling of thankfulness was in his heart, as he beheld a thick, grey mist creeping over the lofty roofs of the palaces; and every minute increasing in denseness, it speedily obscured every object from his sight; it stole over the ground, and seemed to settle over the unburied dead, wrapping them in its embrace, and shrouding their bodies like a pall. The shades of night made the darkness intense; not a breath of wind moved the vapour, it lay like a sea of mist. Fearing that his limbs would become benumbed, he commenced trying to free his hands, and with a thanksgiving to Providence, in a few minutes got clear of the cords. Gently removing the body off his breast, and slightly changing his position, was a vast relief; still he felt considerable pain from his wounds, but life was at stake, and he heeded them little. Blessed with a good constitution, and possessing immense strength and power

of endurance, he looked forward with renewed hope. The hours rolled on, the sentinels were changed, passing their various numbers in a loud tone ; the fog continued so dense, that he could scarcely distinguish the bodies next him.

At length he determined to make the effort to escape ; with considerable difficulty he gained an upright posture, feeling weak, as much from want of food as loss of blood. Now came the difficulty, what direction to take, for he had turned several times, and forgotten on which side lay the Ritreo.

Moving slowly forward, for his shoulder and leg pained him much, he listened to the sounds around him, fearing lest he should come suddenly upon a sentinel, and hoping to hear his tread to warn him. In this manner he proceeded, as he hoped, towards the Ritreo, when suddenly a sound of arms reached his ear, and the next instant he came full against a French soldier, shouldering his piece. Ere the man could utter a word, he felled him to the ground—nevertheless, the man shouted at the top of his voice—

“Numero vingt, gardez vous.”

Summoning all his energies, Vernon dashed heedlessly forward—he heard the words of alarm spreading along the line of sentries ; but on he ran in the dense fog, running the risk of dashing himself against some building. In a few minutes he came in contact with a paling—it gave way, precipitating him into a vast heap of lime, some fifteen feet below. With difficulty he extricated himself, expecting each moment some of his pursuers to come tumbling after him. He imagined he had pitched into the vault of some building under repair ; and there he feared he must stay till day-light, for he felt it utterly impossible to move much further ; his left arm was stiff and useless ; his right leg, he now was satisfied, had a musket ball in it, for he could scarcely move it, without intense pain. Groping about, he felt a large heap of shavings, and on this he threw himself with a prayer of gratitude to Providence for his escape.

As he lay, a host of visions and recollections whirled rapidly through his heated brain. When the first streak of dawn entered the vault, he blessed God that his senses still remained, though his brain was confused.

At length day broke, and he was able to distinguish objects around him; he was right in his conjectures as to the place he was in. It was a large house under repair: in the dense fog, he had missed the Ritreo, and gone down one of the many streets leading from the Prado. Getting into the yard, he looked up at the houses adjoining, and perceived that they must belong to the poorer class of citizens, from the appearance of the jalousies, and the various articles hanging from the windows. He felt quite certain of being kindly received and sheltered by the Spaniards—therefore, he resolved to get over the wall into the next yard; by the aid of a plank, he scrambled, with great difficulty, on the top; beneath him was an immense water hogshead—on this he prepared to descend—but having neither the use, effectively, of the left arm or right leg, he slipped, and upsetting the cask, tumbled with it into the yard, making a great clatter, by displacing sundry other articles. With all his fortitude, he could not avoid a groan from pain; before he could rise, the lower windows were thrown open, and two female bodies, with remarkable scanty covering on the shoulders, were thrust forth. No sooner did they perceive the horrible figure of the Englishman, covered with blood, lime, and dirt of all sorts, than they uttered a succession of shrill screams.

“Perez, Pedro, and Pepe,” was yelled forth, “rouse up—thieves, robbers, the house is on fire—the Gaboches are coming—help, in the name of the blessed Virgin!” and in went the heads.

Our hero was astonished at the uproar; retreat was out of the question, for he could scarcely stand. Suddenly the back door was thrown open, and out rushed two women, followed by two men, and two hideous dogs, that flew yelling at our unfortunate hero, with open mouths, the men hurling a volley of imprecations after

them. No sooner, however, did they obtain a full view of the object of their fears, than men, women, and curs came to a full stop, horror and astonishment pictured on their features. The foremost man was a singularly tall, spectre-like-looking figure, with no other garment than an extremely short shirt, his long, thin visage, surmounted by a stiff, red night-cap, with one long lath of a leg extended, brandishing in his hand a huge pewter bason, while with a voice trembling with fear, he said—

“Avaunt! Dios Diabolical; in the name of the Santissima Trinidad, vanish!”

And he waved his bason in the form of a cross.

Aware what a frightful figure he presented, and feeling he could bear his sufferings no longer, for a burning fever was gaining on him fast, Vernon said—

“My good people, you have nothing to fear from me; I am an officer in the ——— Dragoons.”

“Holy Mother!” exclaimed the youngest of the females, dropping a frying-pan she had seized as a weapon of defence.

“Santos Dios!” exclaimed the barber, dropping the bason on the head of one of the curs, “help, Perez! he faints—he’s dying—the brave officer!”

And all four rushed forward, and caught our hero between them; and the next moment, as they bore him into the house, he was bereft of all consciousness.

The next ten days were a perfect blank in the life of Sidney Vernon—he was quite delirious from fever. At the expiration of that period, he began to recover his recollection. During his illness he had been most carefully and kindly treated by the humble people into whose family he had so fortunately been received.

The master of the house was a barber and surgeon—for in Spain the two trades or professions are exercised by the same individual; and luckily for our hero, Perez Velasquez was really a tolerably skilful leech, had extracted two musket balls, one from the shoulder, the other from the leg, which left his patient with scarcely more flesh upon his bones than his hospitable preserver.

Perez Velasquez had a very pretty daughter, who, during our hero's illness, was unceasing in her attentions. As soon as he was able to talk and ask questions, and crawl from his little bed to the window, he felt an ardent desire to learn how affairs stood in the city, and what had occurred during his illness, hoping that some tidings might be obtained respecting his friend Leon de Haro, and his faithful and attached servant Patrick; although he could scarcely buoy himself up with a hope of the escape of either.

One evening, as the barber's daughter, with all the tenderness and kindness of woman, was making him comfortable by propping his back up with cushions, and spreading a table with some little delicacies she had cooked for his supper—

"You are the kindest little girl in Spain, Pereta," said Vernon, to the plump, lively, black-eyed damsel. "I fear I have been a sad trouble and expense to you, Pereta; the latter I can repay; but your kindness and that of your good father—never."

"Ah, Senor," said the blushing girl, "did you not get all those terrible wounds fighting for us Spaniards?—and you an Englishman!"

Vernon was surprised; for he had spoken but few words since his convalescence, and certainly he had not said he was an Englishman.

"How knew you I was an Englishman, Pereta?"

"Ah, Senor, though you do not speak Spanish quite like one of us, yet it was not by that I knew it. Ah, Dios! how thin you have grown," and she looked at his white, emaciated hand, as he took up some bread, "and you, the tallest and most powerful officer in the Royal barracks. But you will soon make up, now the fever has left you."

"You have seen me before, Pereta—you have a good memory."

"Oh, I saw you often, Senor Capitanos. My father was regimental barber, though you might not have noticed him; and my mother washed for good Colonel Montego and family, and often accompanied them to the

barracks. Do eat some of that nice fowl, Senor—you must get strong."

"I shall get strong and well under your care, Pereta, do not fear—I shall never forget my kind nurse; but tell me, how you knew I was an Englishman."

Pereta blushed, moved some of the things on the table, and filled a glass with wine.

"Now, sit down there, Pereta, opposite me, for I have a great many questions to ask you. Your lover need not be jealous of my keeping you from him—I know you have a lover—for those bright eyes of yours could not exist without causing a flame somewhere."

Pereta looked like a peony; but she laughed merrily, and sat down, taking up some needle-work, she usually employed herself at while attending to our hero's wants.

"When I went to the barracks, Senor," began Pereta, "I used to stop and hear the band, and see the horse soldiers exercise. You were so much taller than the other officers that I remarked you, and I was told you were an Englishman—and as I never saw an Englishman before, I wondered if they were all as tall and strong as you were. When we brought you in here, and your face was cleansed from the blood that covered it, I knew you in a moment."

"It was lucky for me you did, Pereta."

"Ah, Senor, we would have helped any officer or man who fought for our country," said the girl seriously.

"That I feel sure you would, my dear girl. Now tell me, if you can, the state of things in this city. How many more executions were there after the 24th of June? Remember, Pereta, it was the night, or rather morning of the 25th of June, that I was so fortunate as to be received into this house."

"Ah! blessed mother, I remember it well. Oh! those frightful executions, or rather murders, of my poor sainted countrymen. Ah, the 24th—yes, the twenty-fourth, that was the last day—the cruel Gaboches shot no more."

"Good Heaven! Is that really the case, Pereta?"

said Vernon, with a slight flush on his pale cheek ; “ what then became of the poor wretches left in the city prison ? for you must know, my kind nurse, that I was one of those marched to the Prado to be shot.”

Pereta dropped her work and clasped her hands, while her rosy, tempting lips parted in wonder, showing a fine row of beautiful teeth, a beauty somewhat rare with Spanish women, who spoil their teeth by smoking.

“ You brought out to be shot, Senor ! Mother—holy mother ! and was it from the Prado you fled ?”

“ Even so ;” and he gave the barber’s daughter a brief account of his miraculous escape, which caused her the greatest amazement.

“ Now, Pereta, what became of those left in the city prison ?”

“ I heard my father say, Senor, they were condemned to the galleys ; and he saw the brave fellows chained and dressed as galley slaves, marched out of the city to be sent to Malaga and Carthagena.”

“ Alas ! my poor Patrick, is that your fate ? still, it is better than death—your chains may be broken.”

“ And what became of Colonel Montego and the rest of his regiment ?”

“ Ah, Senor, the brave Colonel cut his way out of the city, and escaped. Since then, our king has resigned his power to the cruel Gaboches ; all Spanish soldiers have been ordered out of the city ; the Infanta and Don Antonio sent to Bayonne ; so the French are now our masters and tyrants.”

Vernon mused a moment, and then said—

“ I tell you what, Pereta, you must induce your good father to do for me ; he must contrive to send some letters to Cordova, and also to get some money I have in the bank in this city. I will pay a courier well who will undertake the journey.”

“ Oh, there will be no difficulty in finding a person to travel to Cordova, Senor ; you would not be able to send a letter in any other way. You had better see my father to-morrow about getting your money from the bank ; for

if it were known to the French that there was an officer of the hated — dragoons in the city, nothing could save you.”

The following day, Sidney Vernon consulted Perez Velasquez; he said he might trust his life to Don Jose Mercado, a true Spaniard at heart, detesting the French, and belonging to one of the wealthiest mercantile houses in Madrid. Vernon changed his mind about writing; he found himself improving so rapidly, that a few days would enable him to set out on the journey himself. He wrote a letter, however, to Don Jose Mercado, requesting him to hand over to Perez Velasquez the balance due to him, and also, if possible, procure him a pass as a Spanish merchant going to Cordova.

The worthy barber set out for the banker's and returned quite successful, having seen the banker himself, who expressed sincere joy that our hero had escaped the fate of so many on that fatal day: he wrote a kind letter to him, placed the balance of his account in the barber's hands, and told him to call for the pass when he was fit to travel.

Vernon gained strength and flesh rapidly; and in less than ten days, under Pereta's good care, regained, to her great joy and delight, a strong resemblance to his former self.

At the end of another week a strong mule was purchased, together with a proper dress; and the pass having been obtained from the banker, our hero started for Cordova.

Generous and profuse by nature, Sidney Vernon loaded the kind family of the barber with gifts.

Pereta, poor girl, though it rejoiced her poor heart to see the handsome Englishman restored to health and vigour, began to regret a task that had begun to be a pleasing duty to her. Could he do less than press a kiss upon those cherry lips? Even Ina would have forgiven the parting salute of her lover to the fair Spaniard, for no evil thought rested on the heart that was wholly hers. With the blessings of the whole family he left the house, accompanied by the barber; while the bright

eyes of Pereta gazed after his lofty form till they were dimmed with tears ; and many a long day the family of Perez Velasquez remembered the 24th of June, and the four weeks that followed it.

Vernon joined a train of muleteers travelling to Seville, and passed the gates without any trouble.

At a short distance from the walls, he halted, and gazed upon the towers and church spires of Madrid ; he thought of all he had suffered within those walls ; and after a heartfelt thanksgiving to Providence at his most unhopèd-for deliverance, he gave the reins to his mule, and rejoined the cavalcade of muleteers, merchants, and citizens, pursuing their journey to Seville.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER the departure of our hero and his friend Leon de Haro from the Castle to join their regiment, Lady Ina returned to her paternal home at her father's request. Don Garcias was absent, and the Countess de Palafoix set out shortly afterwards with Padre Ignatius for her estates.

Ina felt a blessed relief, returning to her home, and enjoying the society of her parents, especially of her father, whose kind heart, and cheerful, social disposition endeared him to his children. Her mother was of a much more serious disposition, subject, at times, to religious fits of seclusion, during which she retired to her own suite of apartments, permitting no one to enter but the family confessor, and her own personal attendant, a woman filled with prejudice, and infinitely more gloomy on religious subjects than her mistress.

The departure of Padre Ignatius brought the Condessa

De Haro from her retirement, and in a short time she appeared to take pleasure in her beautiful daughter's society. The Condessa never mentioned Sidney Vernon's name in her presence; but the old Condé often did; and spoke of him in high terms of praise and affection, which was very soothing to the sweet girl's heart.

Naturally cheerful, a splendid musician, and fond of all home enjoyments, Ina felt happier than she had ever done before; for she could think of her absent lover, recall the many joyous moments they had spent together, ramble over the same spots, and sketch the same scenery; and as she did so every word and action of his was recalled, and treasured in her young heart. In her convent, almost hourly employed in religious exercises, or attending ceremonies, monotonous and uselessly repeated, she strove to combat her thoughts, for she conscientiously considered that such ideas were unfit to mingle with religious observances.

A convent life she had never liked, and during a residence of eighteen months with an aunt in Madrid and Seville, she had adopted, for a Spanish maiden, very singular opinions. Now this good lady was a Protestant, but very wisely, in such a country as Spain, kept her doctrines and opinions to herself. Nevertheless, Ina, fond of reading, and of a quick and highly intelligent mind, contrived to get hold of some books belonging to her aunt, which, if found in her possession some fifty years before, would have doubtless brought her to the stake. As we by no means wish to bring religious opinions or discussions into a novel, where we consider them quite out of place, we will simply say—Ina was, to a certain extent, affected by her residence with her aunt, and on her return to her convent, began to have strong doubts whether such establishments were not in direct contradiction to God's word; and a circumstance that shortly after occurred, proved to her that quite as much wickedness had root in these religious establishments as in the "wicked world," as the abbess styled it.

Time passed pleasantly and joyously at Castle Haro.

Don Garcias returned and was rejoiced at seeing his sweet sister looking so happy ; as he kissed her fondly, he whispered.

"You shall never go back again, dear Ina, if I can help it," and laughing, added, that which brought the rich blood into cheek and neck. "There is some one else, caros, would rejoice to hear me say that, so have good heart."

Presently news reached the Castle of Colonel Montego's regiment and its gallant actions at Burgos, and of Sidney Vernon's glory in preserving the colours, and receiving his captain's commission. Leon, too, had obtained his colonel's approbation for his gallant conduct, and the old Condé felt the favour bestowed upon his son's friend as highly as if Leon himself had obtained it.

Then came news of the reverses of the Spaniards, their retreat, and of the ——— Dragoons being ordered to Madrid. From Madrid Leon's letters reached home, filled with praises of our hero.

A pause in events followed, till the Countess of Palafoix returned with news of the insurrection of Madrid, and the terrible excitement existing all over Spain.

"What, Ina!" said Isabella Palafoix, "you here all this time!" She looked fixedly and keenly into the fair girl's eyes, but she read nothing there but calm, unruffled composure.

"And where, Isabella," returned Ina, "would you have the daughter but with her beloved parents, obeying their wishes, and making herself most happy in doing, so?"

"But do not you think, caros," said the Lady Isabella, with a slight change of colour, "that you are sowing the seeds of future discontent, by accustoming yourself to worldly pleasures, when a few months must shut you out from them for ever?"

"Perhaps you may think so, Isabella; and I thank you for the solicitude you express for my future happiness," and a faint smile stole over the lovely face of the intended nun.

De Haro from her retirement, and in a short time she appeared to take pleasure in her beautiful daughter's society. The Condessa never mentioned Sidney Vernon's name in her presence; but the old Condé often did; and spoke of him in high terms of praise and affection, which was very soothing to the sweet girl's heart.

Naturally cheerful, a splendid musician, and fond of all home enjoyments, Ina felt happier than she had ever done before; for she could think of her absent lover, recall the many joyous moments they had spent together, ramble over the same spots, and sketch the same scenery; and as she did so every word and action of his was recalled, and treasured in her young heart. In her convent, almost hourly employed in religious exercises, or attending ceremonies, monotonous and uselessly repeated, she strove to combat her thoughts, for she conscientiously considered that such ideas were unfit to mingle with religious observances.

A convent life she had never liked, and during a residence of eighteen months with an aunt in Madrid and Seville, she had adopted, for a Spanish maiden, very singular opinions. Now this good lady was a Protestant, but very wisely, in such a country as Spain, kept her doctrines and opinions to herself. Nevertheless, Ina, fond of reading, and of a quick and highly intelligent mind, contrived to get hold of some books belonging to her aunt, which, if found in her possession some fifty years before, would have doubtless brought her to the stake. As we by no means wish to bring religious opinions or discussions into a novel, where we consider them quite out of place, we will simply say—Ina was, to a certain extent, affected by her residence with her aunt, and on her return to her convent, began to have strong doubts whether such establishments were not in direct contradiction to God's word; and a circumstance that shortly after occurred, proved to her that quite as much wickedness had root in these religious establishments as in the "wicked world," as the abbess styled it.

Time passed pleasantly and joyously at Castle Haro.

Don Garcias returned and was rejoiced at seeing his sweet sister looking so happy ; as he kissed her fondly, he whispered.

“You shall never go back again, dear Ina, if I can help it,” and laughing, added, that which brought the rich blood into cheek and neck. “There is some one else, caros, would rejoice to hear me say that, so have good heart.”

Presently news reached the Castle of Colonel Montego’s regiment and its gallant actions at Burgos, and of Sidney Vernon’s glory in preserving the colours, and receiving his captain’s commission. Leon, too, had obtained his colonel’s approbation for his gallant conduct, and the old Condé felt the favour bestowed upon his son’s friend as highly as if Leon himself had obtained it.

Then came news of the reverses of the Spaniards, their retreat, and of the ——— Dragoons being ordered to Madrid. From Madrid Leon’s letters reached home, filled with praises of our hero.

A pause in events followed, till the Countess of Palafoix returned with news of the insurrection of Madrid, and the terrible excitement existing all over Spain.

“What, Ina !” said Isabella Palafoix, “you here all this time !” She looked fixedly and keenly into the fair girl’s eyes, but she read nothing there but calm, unruffled composure.

“And where, Isabella,” returned Ina, “would you have the daughter but with her beloved parents, obeying their wishes, and making herself most happy in doing so ?”

“But do not you think, caros,” said the Lady Isabella, with a slight change of colour, “that you are sowing the seeds of future discontent, by accustoming yourself to worldly pleasures, when a few months must shut you out from them for ever ?”

“Perhaps you may think so, Isabella ; and I thank you for the solicitude you express for my future happiness,” and a faint smile stole over the lovely face of the intended nun.

Isabella Palafoix curled her haughty lip; she saw the smile, faint as it was, and she began to think that the Lady Ina was not altogether the simple, easily led kind of person she had imagined her to be.

"It is a pity, I am beginning to think, Ina," said Isabella after a pause, during which Ina very quietly continued colouring the ruins of an old Moorish palace, "that your mother's vow cannot be got rid of; there are more worldly thoughts in your little heart than strictly belong to an intended recluse, eh, Ina?"

"You are quite right, Isabella; I do love this said world, which is passing fair to look at, and was surely created, by a merciful and bountiful Creator, for us to enjoy its pleasures in moderation and with gratitude."

"And with these thoughts," said Isabella, almost bitterly, "you are going to take the veil!"

"Not if I can possibly help it, caros," said Ina, with a gay laugh, but instantly adding, in a serious tone, "still, if my beloved mother insists that it is absolutely necessary to her peace of mind, that I should become a nun, then I will struggle with all these worldly thoughts that still employ my mind, and perhaps, with divine aid, I may banish them—at all events I will try."

"Oh, no doubt," interrupted Isabella, "you will try, till some persuasive voice whispers in your willing ear—"

"Isabella!" said Ina, interrupting her friend's speech, raising her dark expressive eyes from the paper, and fixing them with an expression of cutting reproach upon the countess's daughter, "you are carrying your inquisitorial examination of my heart and feelings too far. You are no relation of mine, and we are too much of an age for me to submit to you as a monitor. Whatever my thoughts and actions may be, they are between me and my God. We have been long friends, Isabella, and whatever your thoughts and feelings may be, you might have spared me from insinuations cruel and uncalled for."

"Dear Ina, forgive me!" said Isabella Palafoix, with a flushed cheek, throwing her arms round the neck of her friend. "I have said what I ought not to have said, and

"I justly deserve your reproaches," and she kissed her cheek. "Another time I will give you a reason. Forgive me now—I will offend no more."

Ina de Haro returned the kiss with a sad smile, and a secret conviction that in Isabella Palafox she had a rival and an enemy.

A few days after this conversation between the two fair girls, Father Ignatius begged Ina would favour him with half an hour's conversation in her mother's oratory. Quite prepared for something of the kind from the family confessor, the moment he returned, Ina, without any hesitation, proceeded thither, and found the padre waiting her arrival.

"God bless you, my daughter," said the priest, laying his hand on the fair girl's head, "it rejoices me to see you looking so well in bodily health."

"I have to thank God, father," returned Ina, in a low, sweet voice, seating herself in a chair the priest presented her, "that I do enjoy excellent health."

"I have requested this interview, my daughter," began the confessor, "in order to prove to you that it is full time that you should commence your novitiate. You are aware how anxious your mother is for this event to take place. Indeed, it ought to have commenced some months ago; but your good father, the Conde, proposed, that during my absence, and while your mother was thus left alone, by the departure of the Condessa de Palafox, that you should return to the castle. Your pious mother objected to this, on good and just grounds; but your worthy father, you know, when he determines on a thing, it must be done. Your mother has, these last few nights, been afflicted with very painful visions and dreams, which undermine her health; therefore, my good daughter, I implore you to fix a time—any day during this month, which is the proper one—for commencing your novitiate."

Ina, while the priest spoke, turned a little pale; but, ere he concluded, had quite recovered her looks and composure, and at once replied to the confessor, in her low, sweet voice:

"I need not tell you, padre, that to free my dear mother from pain or anxiety, I would sacrifice much. I am aware I consented—to save my beloved brother from entering the church, which he did not feel an inclination to do—to take the veil ; there was, however, one stipulation, father, which you well know "

Padre Ignatius looked a little uneasy ; but Ina continued, without seeming to remark the priest :

"You are aware that my aunt left a large fortune between Leon and myself quite at our own disposal—but mine, on the condition, that when the time arrived for my commencing my novitiate, I should have one full year to consider of it, before I took the oaths. Then, if I entered the convent with my own free will, the fortune left me should go as an offering to the said convent. If I was forced to become a nun, the said fortune was bequeathed to Leon, my brother."

"But, my dear daughter," said the padre, considerably agitated, "no one forces you—the blessed saints forbid ! You just now said, you consented to take the veil."

"Seven months since," continued Ina, without noticing the padre's interruption, "my father promised that I should have twelve months for consideration. This is now the month of June, padre ; at the expiration of five months we will renew this subject ; till then, permit me to continue the exquisite happiness I enjoy. At the same time, assure my beloved mother, that I would not cause her an hour's needless pain or uneasiness for worlds. The country besides, father, is in a fearful state—the French respect no religious foundation—and we know not the moment when even this peaceful province may be invaded."

Padre Ignatius, with all his acuteness and self-assurance, and knowledge of the human mind, was yet baffled in his reading of Ina de Haro's heart ; he could not entirely hide his vexation, though he made the effort, saying :

"Our Holy Mother forbid, my dear daughter, that for such a trifle as five months you should be pressed to do

that which is—" the padre hesitated, and then added—" which you are not quite prepared to do at this moment. Unburden your mind to me, my daughter ; I trust with Divine help I shall be able to restore it to a healthy state, and assist you with my prayers. What time to-morrow, my daughter, will you seek the confessional ? I have been absent, unavoidably, a long time from my duties."

"In truth, father, I have passed that period solely in the society of my beloved parents ; we are all, perhaps, sinful sometimes in thought—but Providence reads our hearts—I have nothing to confess, padre."

The priest looked confounded, his cheek grew pale, and his lips moved, but he uttered not a word ; his dark and singularly piercing eyes were bent upon her unshrinking orbs with a strange, malignant expression ; it was but for a moment ; he turned away, bowed low, saying, very meekly :

"As you please, my daughter."

The intelligence of the disasters and executions that followed the insurrection at Madrid, began to spread over the country, creating the greatest excitement and alarm ; and a spirit of vengeance in the Spaniard was roused, that never subsided as long as a Frenchman trod upon the soil of Spain.

The first rumours of the disturbances were brought to the castle by the Countess de Palafox, though she was quite ignorant of the military having joined the people. But succeeding reports filled every mind with vague alarms, and finally it was ascertained, that all the military in barracks in Madrid had joined in the insurrection, and that scarcely a third part had escaped the massacre that followed. They further learned that military executions took place daily of all those taken in arms.

This intelligence alarmed the Conde and all the inmates of the castle so exceedingly, that Don Garcias left for Seville, where, it was said, Colonel Montego and the remnant of his regiment were ; though by orders of Murat, seconded by the Spanish government, his regiment was at once to be disbanded, for the part it had taken in the revolt.

The consternation and grief of Don Garcias may be conceived when he heard the full particulars, and that there was scarcely a doubt, but that his brother, Major Doaz, Captain Vernon, and Lieutenant Valerde, had fallen during the struggle before the arsenal. He knew not what to do; to go back, and plunge his parents and sister into deep and bitter grief, tormented him; he felt disposed to proceed to Madrid, though Colonel Montego, who was almost broken-hearted at the fate of his officers and men, felt satisfied they were slain; and, if not slain on the spot, a worse fate would have assuredly been awarded them, as every soul taken after the insurrection was quelled, was shot on the Prado.

Just as Don Garcias was about to return to Castle de Haro, to the astonishment and delight of himself and Colonel Montego, Leon de Haro arrived in Seville, haggard and worn, and still far from cured of his wounds. The brothers embraced each other with unspeakable joy, but Leon was sad and dejected, for the loss of his friend Sidney pressed heavily upon his heart.

"Perhaps our dear friend Vernon may have escaped as you have done," exclaimed Garcias.

"Alas, Garcias! I have lost the noblest, bravest hearted friend, man ever had. Good heavens! it distracts me when I think of it. Sidney Vernon was shot to death on the Prado—I have positive information on the subject."

"Merciful heaven! Leon, is that the fact? what a fate! and in our cause. If he had fallen on the battle field, it would have wrung our hearts; but, to be led out, and die a thousand deaths in one! By Santiago! I swear to shake off this inert, lazy habit I have given myself, and seek a bloody revenge on those accursed French. But tell me, Leon, all the particulars of your fortunate escape, and how you became assured of the melancholy fate of our beloved friend."

"My dear Garcias," said Leon, in a very dejected tone, "my narrative is a very short one, but you shall hear."

Leon then continued, after describing the sortie from the barracks—

"During the terrible struggle before the arsenal, a charge of French cavalry separated me from Major Doaz and my friend, who at that time, I was aware, had received several slight wounds; as I made a desperate effort, with a few men, to rejoin him, I received a pistol shot in the side, the ball lodging in the flesh; I fell against the frame-work of a low window, for we had been forced back into one of the side streets, and the next instant received a blow on the head from the butt of a heavy horse pistol, which rendered me nearly insensible. In my fall I burst into the window, and fortunately for me, fell into a small room on the ground floor; though faint and bleeding profusely, I had my senses still about me, and immediately I fell into the room, a young woman, of the lower classes, caught hold of me, saying, 'Get up, get up, if you have the power—I will hide you in the cellar.' With her help, I made an effort, and with some difficulty contrived to get to the place she named. She dragged an old mattress into the place, on which I sat down. 'Stay there,' she said, 'my husband is out fighting the accursed Gaboches—the saints grant that he escape—I go to watch.' I begged for a glass of water, which she gave me, before she went to barricade the door, and watch for her husband. I felt very sick and weak; the place was very dark, but I could hear the uproar overhead gradually subsiding, and presently the woman returned in a state of great agitation. 'They have all retired from the street,' she said, 'I saw them dragging away the brave officer, that fought so desperately at the arsenal gate, and a hundred others besides.'

"I thought of Sidney, and groaned with pain and the misery of thought. 'Is your husband come back?' I asked. 'No, senor officer,' she answered, 'neither husband or son. God help me!' and she wrung her hands. 'Ah! cursed Gaboches—if I were a man—but come, senor, they may yet return, I will help you into a better room, you are safe now.'

"I got up into a room, humble but clean, and the poor woman assisted me as well as she could; but it was

necessary to get a leech of some kind, for I plainly felt the ball in my side—it was near the surface, a mere flesh wound. She promised to get me one at night; before that time, however, to her infinite joy, both husband and son returned safe and unwounded; the boy was scarcely fifteen; the man was a carpenter by trade, and a kind-hearted, obliging fellow he was. From him I learned that the French had massacred the people without mercy, but that part of a cavalry regiment had got off through the gates, and that numbers were carried to the city prison.

“As soon as it was dark, the boy went out, and brought back a barber surgeon, who extracted the ball, without giving me much pain, telling me that a week would set me to rights. I had a small sum of money about me, and with it I procured whatever I wanted. After a couple of days, the carpenter ventured abroad—excepting the military executions, the city was restored to tranquillity. I was in a deplorable state of mind; I thirsted to hear something certain of my poor friend. The carpenter watched all the prisoners led out to execution. I gave him the description of Vernon’s remarkable person. The third day he returned with a mournful face. ‘Ah, senor capitanos,’ said the poor fellow, ‘it’s all over.’ I felt sick at heart. ‘I’m sure it was your friend; a tall, powerful man; his clothes were all torn and bloody, and defaced, but I am sure I saw the remains of his uniform. Ah! senor, he walked, looking as calm and composed as I would going to my daily work.’ This intelligence distracted me, Garcias, for more than one reason—besides the strong attachment I felt for this noble Englishman, I trembled to think of the effect this intelligence would have upon our sister Ina. I see, Garcias, that you are aware of this ill-starred attachment between Ina and the unfortunate Vernon.”

“Yes, Leon, I observed it, or rather I should say, my intended bride stated the fact to me; at the same time strongly beseeching me to exert my influence with my father and mother. I then thought the destiny of Ina

might be changed, by exerting my influence with Padre Ignatius ; but it is now useless to talk of these things. Vernon's fate is deplorable."

"Alas, yes! and strange to say, only a few weeks before this insurrection, Vernon learned that by the death of the Earl of Delmont, a relation, he was left fine estates ; he would also have been Earl of Delmont at his uncle's death."

"Santiago!" exclaimed Don Garcias, "that carpenter might have been mistaken; what became of the other prisoners, and of his Irish servant, Patrick?"

"There is no doubt the carpenter was right; he stood by the prison door concealed, and gave a full description of Vernon's person. Poor Patrick, as brave a fellow as ever lived, and who fought on that melancholy day like a lion, must have been slain or shot on the Prado, or else sent to the galleys, for Murat suddenly stopped the executions, and condemned those left to the galleys."

"As soon as I was able," continued Leon, "I left Madrid, disguised as a muleteer; when I reached——, I heard that my colonel, and the regiment, had proceeded to Seville, but that, by order of the Spanish government, the regiment was disbanded. And now, Garcias, what do you think will be the best way of proceeding? You say Ina is at the castle; we cannot keep this intelligence from her, she is too keen-sighted to be blinded by false representations."

"And yet, with all your supposed positive information with respect to his death," said Garcias, after a pause, "we have no right to assert that he is no more. It is not impossible but that he may have escaped—more improbable mistakes have been made; he might be amongst those sent to the galleys."

"A degradation worse than death," exclaimed Leon.

"Not when undeserved," said Garcias.

"I will make inquiries whither the prisoners from Madrid were taken. By some extraordinary chance, he might be one of them. If so, I will risk life to rescue him."

Leon grasped Don Garcias' hand with strong emotion, not because he felt any hope respecting Vernon, but at his brother's unusual display of energy, so foreign to his early habits of life. Leon de Haro had other causes for depression, beside the fate of his valued friend—but even to a brother, whom he loved dearly, he did not confide his secret cause of dejection. The following day the brothers left Seville for Cordova.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was in the early part of the month of August, that a single horseman checked his steed on the brow of the hill that looks down upon Cordova and its glorious valley. The horseman was Sidney Vernon. He had made his way from Madrid to —, where he had purchased a horse, and joining various parties of muleteers, continued his journey as far as —. From thence to Cordova he proceeded alone, for he was well acquainted with the road, Leon de Haro and himself having twice pursued the same route.

As he checked his horse on the well-remembered spot where he first looked down on the luxurious plain of Cordova, he became profoundly touched by the train of melancholy associations the scene recalled.

All was still and tranquil in the beautiful valley, for the cruel invaders had not yet set foot on those delightful regions. On every side, plants were to be seen in the greatest luxuriance; as he descended into the vale, the cactus and the aloe, the caparis and the *astragalus lignus*, and the wild gilliflower, grew in singular profusion, whilst even the pomegranate showed here and there—still, with all the beauties surrounding him, Sidney Vernon felt terribly oppressed—all sorts of doubts and fears crossing his mind.

Anxious and unhappy, he spurred on his horse, and entered the gates of Cordova, and rode into the Plaza Mayor, entering the court-yard of the well-remembered hostel of the Duc de Braganza.

Vernon was instantly recognised by the fat, jovial-looking landlord, who rushed into the yard, exclaiming—

“Holy Virgin! is it you, Senor Capitanos? The saints be praised, you were not then shot on the Prado, as Don Leon—”

“Don Leon!” exclaimed Sidney Vernon, with a shout of intense joy, “has he also escaped?”

“Thanks to the Madonna and the blessed saints he’s alive; but as dismal and down-hearted as a maid at losing her lover; but come in, Senor, come in; your return will delight the whole family at the Castle, and you are just in time, too—Don Garcias is going to be married.”

“Who is at the Castle?” demanded Vernon, following the worthy landlord into a saloon, wishing, but not daring, to mention the name of the Lady Ina, though it trembled on his lips.

“Only the family, Senor Capitanos, for I may call the Condessa and her beautiful daughters part of the family.”

“And are they all well?” interrogated our hero.

“All, except the Lady Ina,” said the landlord, “who, the Major Domo says, has not been in good health lately. She has retired to her convent, and I believe the ceremony of her novitiate will take place immediately.”

Vernon felt a sickening sensation of despair creeping over him; but he quickly cast it off, for the thought came that he was yet in time to save her.

“As I do not wish to take the family at the Castle by surprise, I will write a letter, while you order a messenger to take it. I shall also be glad of some dinner, for I have ridden nearly fifteen leagues.”

“You shall have a messenger this moment; there is the post-boy going to the Castle. Marachito! get out your mule—be quick—I have a letter to add to your bag,” bawled the landlord, bustling off to order dinner.

Vernon wrote only two or three lines—sealed his note, and had it conveyed to the post-bag, and then leaned out of the window. Gazing abstractedly on the well-remembered Plaza, his attention was soon attracted by a laughable scene between the Marachito and his mule; the lad was endeavouring to coax the mule to let him mount.

“That’s a famous mule, Capitanos,” said the landlord, entering the room with a bottle of wine; “he’s hard to mount, it is true; but when once on his back, Santiago! he makes up for lost time.”

Just at that moment, he did start, for the lad had contrived to get up; but the mule, with a powerful jerk of his hind quarters, sent the Marachito over his head, and then set off at a tremendous pace; the lad scrambled to his legs, and, without a moment’s hesitation, scampered after the mule and post-bags.

“This is rather a novel mode of conveying the post,” said our hero, with a smile.

“It all comes to the same thing,” said the host as he drew the cork; “the beast knows he is to go to the Castle better than any biped in the province.”

“But does he always treat his rider in the same unceremonious manner?” questioned Sidney Vernon.

“The Marachito and the ‘Cid’ manage the matter between them uncommonly well, for I never hear any complaints,” said the landlord. “Take a cup of this sparkling wine, Capitanos. It will refresh you, and give you an appetite for your dinner, after your ride.”

Not having heard from England for many months, our hero requested the landlord to send to the banker’s, and ascertain if there were any letters for him; and, just as he had finished his dinner, the messenger returned, with a very complimentary note of congratulation from the banker, at his return, alive and well, and forwarding two letters. One he instantly recognised as from his friend Tressidder, with the Cadiz post-mark; the other was from England in a strange hand.

On opening Henry Tressidder’s letter, he perceived it

was written nearly a month after the insurrection at Madrid. It was as follows :

On board his Majesty's frigate ——,
29th July, 18—.

“MY DEAR SID,

“I write in a state of great anxiety ; we have just returned from a cruise to Majorca, Minorca, &c. ; the first intelligence we heard was the insurrection at Madrid ; vague rumours afterwards reached us of great massacres and executions, amongst the people, and that your regiment suffered severely ; but that the colonel and two or three officers, and a few of the men, cut their way out of the city. Now I trust in God you were amongst those who escaped. Still I am in great anxiety, and some newspapers that came out in the *Diomedé* frigate to a brother mid, imparted to me most extraordinary, and to you, most important intelligence. Your uncle, Lord Delmont, has slipped his cable.

“From his conduct to you, I have no scruple in saying what I do ; though, for my sweet Mary's sake, I regret his sudden death : —apoplexy the paper said. In a later paper I saw another paragraph, which surprises me—it stated that the Countess of Delmont had left England, for the benefit of her own health, as well as that of the young heir, who showed signs of incipient decline ; Malta was their destination. Now all this is very surprising—but I do not like to express what I think in a letter that may never reach its destination.

“There has been the devil to pay here ; the mob rose yesterday in vast numbers, caught hold of the unfortunate Solano, and put him to death in the most cruel manner. Confound these Spaniards, I don't half like them—I mean the men—the women are charming, and have splendid ankles. We have received orders to sail for Cork, to bring out Sir Arthur Wellesley, who is to take command of the British forces. Now, my dear fellow, go over to England, and dispute the succession of

that Neapolitan cub—what's the use of an Earl, with sixty thousand a year, getting shot at; it's all very well for younger sons to be turned into targets.

"I have no time for more, my dear Sid, and I trust in God this will find you well and safe in Cordova. Farewell! if you must fight, shoot as many of those Crapauds as you can; for they are playing the very devil in the interior of this ill-fated country; but if you will take my advice, leave the Dons to fight their own battles. God bless you, old boy—in my heart I hope we shall meet in dear old England, and that I may be a commander, and come to anchor alongside my dear Mary. God bless you.

"Your faithful and affectionate friend,
"HENRY TRESSIDDER."

"N.B. I forgot to say I have just been appointed first lieutenant of the *Diomedé*; that's walking up the rattlings—eh, Sid? a friend in the cabin—eh, old fellow?"

For a considerable time our hero remained immersed in busy thought. The paragraph stating the Countess of Delmont's departure for Malta, so soon after the death of the Earl, astonished him; there was some motive for this abrupt conduct, he felt confident. He was, however, roused from his reveries by the galloping of a horse into the court-yard of the hostel—a few seconds, and the door was thrown open, and Leon de Haro embraced him with all the affection of a brother.

This was a joyful meeting indeed, and for several minutes they looked into each other's countenance, without being able to utter a word.

"I never expected this meeting, Sidney," said Leon, with much emotion. "But how comes it?" he added, with something like friendly reproach in his tone, "that you did not at once come on to the castle; did you think our feelings of affection had lessened or—"

"Nay, Leon, you wrong me," interrupted Sidney Vernon, greatly agitated by the meeting of his friend and his previous thoughts. "But persuaded as you must have been of my death, I thought it better to break the intelligence in the manner I did; and in truth, Leon, my heart is, and was, troubled from many causes."

Leon understood well what troubled his friend; he suppressed a sigh—but, casting off, with an effort, the painful feelings that saddened their meeting, he said with a more cheerful voice—

"We must not let our joyful meeting be overcast with clouds; there's a ray of hope for the future, though you must expect a lecture for this uncalled-for delay at Cordova."

In half an hour the two friends were mounted and pursuing the delightful road that led along the banks of the Guadalquivir from Cordova to the Castle de Haro.

As they rode, side by side, under the delightful shade of the vast oak trees, that bordered the banks of the river, they conversed much more cheerfully than at their first meeting. Youth is not the season for long or deep depression—youth will hope, when mature years despair.

Vernon, in his secret heart, felt that Ina might be his; he at least forced himself into that belief that he should be able to overcome the obstacles at present in his way.

"So, Don Garcias is to be married shortly," said Vernon to his friend, "at least, so mine host of the Braganza informed me."

"Such is the fact," said Leon; "by Santiago! Sidney, you will scarcely recognise my good brother; he has cast off all his sluggish habits."

"He is now as enthusiastic and ardent in the cause of our unfortunate country, as any Spaniard living. His marriage alone delays his raising a regiment, which he intends offering to Colonel Montego. But we will talk of this hereafter; we have much to say to each other. It is reported that the French intend entering our province, and advancing upon Cordova; if so, there is not a peasant

from fifteen to sixty that will not draw his knife in defence of his beloved valleys."

"England, no doubt," observed our hero, "intends joining Spain against the invader. I had a letter from my friend Tressidder, who stated that Sir Arthur Wellesley was to take the command of the British forces in Spain."

"Ah, if England aid us, we shall drive them over the Pyrenees again," said Leon, with animation.

"Now tell me, Leon," said our hero, just as they came in sight of the castle, "how is Lady Ina? You know my heart and my feelings, Leon. I have now a noble fortune to—"

"Oh, Sidney, my dear friend, why name fortune in the same breath with your ill-fated love for Ina," he checked his horse as he spoke, and his handsome features became overcast. "Listen to me one moment, my friend, my brother, for you are as dear to me as a brother. You must know in your heart, that fortune, or wealth, if it were a principality that you possessed, has nothing whatever to do with Ina's destiny. If you never possessed aught but your good arm and sword, you would be preferred by my father to the first grandee in the kingdom, for he loves you, and were not Ina's fate fixed, irrevocably, he would, I am satisfied, bestow her hand upon you with every confidence and trust in her happiness. I warned you, long since, Sidney, but in vain. Garcias, I know, made strenuous efforts to change my father's resolve, but the influence Padre Ignatius exercised over my mother, and her own intense desire to see Ina a nun, counteracts every effort. We must not renew this painful subject, my dear friend, for it rends my heart. There are times when I feel inclined to abandon this world myself, and save my sister from a seclusion I know she does not love."

As he spoke, they rode into the court-yard of the castle, and all conversation ceased.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SIDNEY VERNON had no reason to be dissatisfied with his reception by the old Conde. A beloved son could not have been welcomed with more affection; whilst even the Condessa expressed herself more warmly than he had expected. The Countess of Palafox and her daughters were cordial and kind; and had not Vernon been blind to all female allurements but the one, he must have perceived, in the flushed cheek and sparkling eyes of the Lady Isabella, that his return, alive and well, affected her much more than she would like to confess. He only missed the greeting of Don Garcias, who was not expected to return from Jaen till the next day. Notwithstanding this gratifying reception, on retiring to rest, after spending a couple of hours with Leon, in mutual relation of their adventures from the period of their separation, he felt singularly depressed and troubled.

He passed a restless night, his mind dwelling entirely on the means of procuring either an interview with Ina, or finding an opportunity of getting a letter conveyed to her. The convent of "Our Lady of Cordova," scarcely more than half a mile from the castle, where the Conde's daughter was to take the veil, had been, some two hundred years previous to our story, founded by one of the De Ilaros. Subsequently, it became richly endowed, rebuilt, and greatly enlarged. Standing upon a slight elevation on the borders of the Guadalquivir, its situation was fine, commanding extensive views over the lovely valley—the spires and towers of Cordova, nearly a league distant, being distinctly visible; the gardens and pleasure-grounds were very extensive, and surrounded by a massive stone wall; the river flowed round its base, being very broad, and the current so gentle, that it resembled a miniature lake.

from fifteen to sixty that will not draw his knife in defence of his beloved valleys."

"England, no doubt," observed our hero, "intends joining Spain against the invader. I had a letter from my friend Tressidder, who stated that Sir Arthur Wellesley was to take the command of the British forces in Spain."

"Ah, if England aid us, we shall drive them over the Pyrenees again," said Leon, with animation.

"Now tell me, Leon," said our hero, just as they came in sight of the castle, "how is Lady Ina? You know my heart and my feelings, Leon. I have now a noble fortune to—"

"Oh, Sidney, my dear friend, why name fortune in the same breath with your ill-fated love for Ina," he checked his horse as he spoke, and his handsome features became overcast. "Listen to me one moment, my friend, my brother, for you are as dear to me as a brother. You must know in your heart, that fortune, or wealth, if it were a principality that you possessed, has nothing whatever to do with Ina's destiny. If you never possessed aught but your good arm and sword, you would be preferred by my father to the first grandee in the kingdom, for he loves you, and were not Ina's fate fixed, irrevocably, he would, I am satisfied, bestow her hand upon you with every confidence and trust in her happiness. I warned you, long since, Sidney, but in vain. Garcias, I know, made strenuous efforts to change my father's resolve, but the influence Padre Ignatius exercised over my mother, and her own intense desire to see Ina a nun, counteracts every effort. We must not renew this painful subject, my dear friend, for it rends my heart. There are times when I feel inclined to abandon this world myself, and save my sister from a seclusion I know she does not love."

As he spoke, they rode into the court-yard of the castle, and all conversation ceased.

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The rules of this convent were neither strict nor monotonous, for visitors were allowed to see both nuns and novices; even the former, under slight restrictions, were permitted to leave the walls for short intervals; whilst those who took the veil in "Our Lady of Cordova," and brought large donations or bequests with them, were allowed unusually great indulgences—such as a separate chamber, a freedom from attending midnight, or, indeed, any nightly mass or ceremony, rigorous fasting, or disagreeable penances. In fact, wealth commanded, in the convent of "Our Lady of Cordova," as it does almost everywhere, comforts and privileges, that caused those blessed with that said wealth to bear their seclusion from the world with tolerable patience and pious resignation. The Lady Abbess was of high family—related to the Bishop of Oveida, who annually visited his kinswoman in great state; and, during this visit, many young persons commenced their novitiate, and many novices became nuns. Much pomp and religious display took place at these, in truth, melancholy exhibitions of mistaken piety and renunciations of the world.

After breakfast the following morning, Vernon applied himself to read a letter from England, from Mr. Stockdale, concerning the estates left him by the Earl of Delmont, giving a full account of everything, and requesting instructions how to act till he himself could return to England, and take his affairs into his own management. The reply was soon written; and the return of Don Garcias, and his delight, surprise, and cordial welcome, for a time chased away all gloomy feelings.

Don Garcias listened to Vernon's account of his extraordinary escape with amazement.

"Well, by Santiago! you have that to say, Sidney, that few, if any, will ever have to recount. You must have a charmed life; and, in truth, we shall all want something of the sort to free our country from these detested invaders. I am the bearer of sad news. General Dupont has, they say, marched from Toledo at the head of six thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, and one

thousand marines of the Imperial Guard, and carrying with him twenty-four pieces of cannon, and is directing his march upon Cordova, through the plains of La Mancha. The whole province will rise in arms."

"This is sad news, indeed," said the old Conde, greatly excited. "This morning I had a letter from Don Pedro de Echevero, President of the Military Council of Cordova, who is already preparing to raise troops to dispute Dupont's passage of the Guadalquiver."

"It will take the French General ten days before he can possibly reach the Guadalquiver, and much can be done in that time," observed Don Garcias.

"Should the French pass the river," said Sidney, addressing the Conde, "this mansion would not be defensible; and, be assured, the lawless followers of Dupont will spare neither castle nor convent."

"I trust," returned the old Conde, "they will never enter our peaceful province; but should they, we have men enough between this and Ciudad-Real to annihilate them."

Sidney Vernon would not contradict the old Conde, but he thought very differently. Indeed, he had but little hope that an untaught, undisciplined peasantry, would be able to resist, with any chance of success, the veteran soldiers of France.

"Come, Sidney," observed Don Leon, "let us ride over to Cordova, and see what effect this news has had upon the council and the people."

They accordingly proceeded to Cordova, and found an immense crowd, in a highly-excited state, assembled round the council-hall; intelligence having been received from the junta of Seville, that the entrance of the French into the province was to be resisted by every male capable of carrying arms.

"You see," said Leon de Haro, as they left the council-chamber, after conversing for nearly an hour with many of the members, "you see, this will be war to the knife; the people will fight to the last gasp."

"There is no doubt of that, Leon. But is not your

father wrong to persist in continuing in the castle? and is there not a positive madness in the community of the convent of Our Lady of Cordova remaining in so defenceless a situation, in the very march of an army notorious for driving both nuns and monks out of their sanctuaries?"

Leon de Haro hesitated for a moment, and then observed: "I believe it is the intention of the Lady Abbess, the moment she is assured of the French entering the province, to move with the whole community to Seville, where they possess a large mansion belonging to their order."

Vernon made no remark; but he was startled, and inwardly determined that Ina should never be carried to Seville to be made a nun.

Meanwhile, preparations for Don Garcias' marriage, which was to take place in a few days, went on; the Bishop of Oveida was hourly expected, and a considerable degree of bustle and preparation was visible in the castle. Don Garcias was absent at his own mansion at Jaen, and Don Leon was dispatched to Seville on business for his father.

Our hero, during this time, was intently engaged on his project of flight with Ina de Haro, though the undertaking rendered him restless and unhappy, for he felt he was repaying the hospitality and kindness of the old Conde with ingratitude. In vain he strove to keep down conscience with the idea that he was saving Ina from a fate she detested. Would she have detested the life of a nun if he had not won her young affections? was a question that often arose to his mind. Had they not met, might she not have borne her fate with resignation, and, in time, become reconciled to it? But now the case was very different. To desert her, and leave her to her fate, would be positive and downright cruelty; and, sooner than do so, he vowed he would risk a hundred lives, had he them to lose; besides, he flattered himself that, once Ina became his wife, they should find but little difficulty in being reconciled with the kind old

Conde, backed, as he felt confident he would be, by Don Garcias and his wife.

Gold is a powerful lever. Before three days had passed over our hero had managed to get a letter conveyed to Ina. In the establishment of Our Lady of Cordova was a gardener, a man well advanced in life, who, though without any apparent means of enjoyment beyond his employment, was yet greedy of gain. His wife, some few years older than himself, was the convent portress. He himself inhabited a small cottage at the extremity of the grounds, and close to the wall in which was a small gate, opening out into the cork wood. Of this gate he kept the key, having every night to give it to the portress, who was in duty bound to hang it in the chamber of the convent house-keeper, whose business it was to look after the keys.

Our lover was lavish of his gold, and both the gardener and the portress were soon under its influence, and willing to serve him. A duplicate key was first procured, and an interview proposed to Ina, who, after the passing of one or two letters, consented to a meeting in the gardens of the convent, at a time when the nuns were engaged in prayers, from which, as she had not yet commenced her novitiate, she was exempt.

It is an oft-told tale—lovers' vows, persuasions and entreaties, and woman's faith, belief, and final consent. In the end Vernon prevailed, and Ina consented, though with tears and trembling hesitation, to fly, and unite her destiny to his.

In this interview Vernon could perceive that Ina was greatly altered; she was thinner, paler, and looked as if she had endured much grief.

For several weeks she had mourned him as dead, and was evidently fast sinking into a perfect apathy of mind, a total heedlessness of the future, resigned to her destiny, and ready to take the veil, even dispensing with her novitiate. This was her state on her first interview with her brother Leon, after Vernon's return to Castle de Haro, who, shocked with the change in his sister's

appearance, and although he knew that it was his mother's and Father Ignatius' wish that Ina should remain in ignorance of their English guest's return—as, thinking him dead, her reluctance to a convent life would diminish, and, in time, her serenity of mind would return—could not refrain from relieving her gentle heart from the agony of thought he could clearly perceive was wearing her away.

He did so, however, cautiously and by degrees; and thus Ina, when she received her lover's first letter, was prepared for its reception. Still, when they met, she was pale and thin, and the roses were gone from her cheek. Crossing the cork wood, on his return to the castle, after this meeting, the galloping of a horse at a short distance made him aware that Leon had returned, and he hastened to meet him; but, on reaching the mansion, learned that his friend had retired to his chamber; he therefore threw aside his mantle, and making some alterations in his attire, descended to the saloon, in which the family usually passed the evenings, where he found only the Lady Isabella, reading very intently an old Moorish romance.

She laid aside the book as our hero entered, and looking up in his face with a serious expression of countenance, said :—

“Was that you, Signor Vernon, who rode into the court-yard just now?”

“No, fair lady, it was not,” he returned, seating himself near the very handsome daughter of the countess; “it was Leon, but he has retired to his chamber. No doubt he has ridden a long journey to-day.”

“Can you account, Signor Vernon,” remarked the fair Spaniard, leaning her beautiful arm on the table, and resting her head on her hand in a thoughtful and graceful manner, “for the strange alteration in Leon's manner and appearance lately—he seems so depressed in spirits?”

“Every Spaniard,” replied our hero to the lady's question, “must be affected more or less by the times; the threatened invasion of this province has no doubt its effect both upon his mind and manner.”

The Lady Isabella shook her head. "You men rarely feel political differences so acutely as to allow them to completely alter your tone and manner in private. No, Leon has something more on his mind—and so have you, Signor Vernon;" and the dark eyes of the maiden rested very meaningly on his.

Vernon felt a slight twinge, and perhaps his face betrayed some inward emotion, for before he could reply, the lady continued, "Did you ever, Signor Vernon, see the ceremony of a novice taking the veil?"

"Never, and trust I shall never witness so cruel and unnecessary a sacrifice."

"It is sometimes, nevertheless," returned the maiden, "a very splendid and imposing ceremony. You, of course, look upon the ceremonies and rites of our church, if not with disgust, at least with contempt."

"Nay, lady, there you are wrong. No such feeling exists in my mind against any religion that has Christ as its foundation stone. What I said had only reference to the cruel custom of immuring unwilling victims."

"Probably, Signor Vernon," interrupted the Lady Isabella, "you never bestowed a thought upon the subject, till, dazzled by the beauty of a fair novice, you became the champion, not of Christendom, but of all the deplorable damsels, vowed by unnatural parents to the supposed horrors of monastic seclusion."

Sidney Vernon could not exactly divine what the conversation of his fair companion was intended to lead to. There was a something in her look and manner that led him to imagine she had either obtained some information of his proceedings, or she was guessing at them. He therefore quietly said,—

"You speak, Lady Isabella, very lightly of the sufferings of those devoted, as you say, by parents, from purely religious motives, but which, I think, proceeds from mistaken piety—sometimes from avarice, oftentimes rash vows."

"Well, allowing all that," impatiently interrupted the lady, "still, you must admit, that a convent is oftentimes a quiet, peaceful home to many driven from the world by

persecution, and often by tyranny, in those bound to protect them. How many with blighted hopes and anguished hearts, have, in a convent, regained at least composure and resignation, and lived to bless the abode that had soothed their sorrows, protected them from their enemies, and brought back peace to their minds, and resignation to the Divine Will?"

"But all those advantages, dear lady," returned our hero, "may be enjoyed without retirement within the walls of a convent; though perhaps not in this country, where so much power is vested in the nobles and in the priesthood."

"Ah!" said the Spanish maiden, with a light laugh, "you are, I see, thinking of the boasted freedom you enjoy in that cold nebulous climate of yours; and yet I have heard you say, law is only to be enjoyed by the rich; that a poor man has no chance of justice if he cannot fee the lawyers; a rich man, if he has a bad wife, can get rid of her, but a poor man must put up with her. We are getting on strange topics, Signor Vernon," continued the Lady Isabella, rising from her seat, "but let me, before I go, give you this warning—it may prevent your after-life being embittered by a troubled conscience. I fear you have succeeded in turning a young and innocent heart from her duty; nay, hear me, Signor Vernon, patiently, for I mean you well. You have no excuse for what you have done—you were aware, before you came into the bosom of this family, that Ina de Haro was irrevocably vowed to take the veil—you thoughtlessly broke in upon her peace of mind, recalled the world and its attractions to her view—thereby causing her, I fear, endless misery; especially if you persist in following up the dictates of your ungovernable inclinations. Farewell, Signor Vernon, let my words cause you to think and pause, ere too late;" and with a look of singular meaning in her dark eyes, Isabella de Palafox glided rapidly out of the saloon, leaving her companion with a flushed face, an angry brow, and a mind filled with a thousand painful and conflicting thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE morning of the 24th of August broke heavily and gloomily over the Castle de Haro, while yet its inmates were buried in slumber. It was a day eventful to many, for the French general had already entered the province of Andalusia, and was marching unchecked across the plains of La Mancha.

All Vernon's arrangements were completed, and that night, at twelve, Ina was to meet him at the portal leading from the convent plantations into the cork wood. Two hundred yards from the portal, there would be a light berlin, with two swift mules, to convey them to Jaen; from thence relays would take them to Malaga, where he intended to unite his destiny to that of Ina, and, if no reconciliation could be brought about, to embark for England. He was not at all afraid of being pursued, for he felt satisfied, if once Ina succeeded in flying from her convent with him, neither Don Garcias or Leon would follow them. On the contrary, he thought they would endeavour to calm the anger of their parents.

On the morning of that fatal day, almost immediately after breakfast, Don Garcias and Leon set out for Cordova, to escort the Bishop of Oveida to the castle. Vernon rode part of the way with them, and then returned, and having given his horse to a groom, was crossing the long corridor to his chamber, when to his great surprise a side door opened, and Padre Ignatius stood before him.

We have before said, that there was nothing remarkable in the priest's face or figure—that in his eyes was his great power; they were large, full, and intensely dark.

"You will, I trust, pardon me, my son," began the priest, meekly, and with a low salutation, "if in my zeal for the welfare of our holy church, and the love I bear this family, with whom I have dwelt for years in peace

and happiness, I say aught unpleasant to your feelings ; —but pray enter this chamber, that we may speak unobserved.”

With a slight flush on his cheek, and a somewhat haughty motion of his stately head, our hero walked into the room after the priest, without, however, uttering a word.

“Recollect, my son,” continued the padre, handing him a chair, “though we think differently, and our creeds bear a different interpretation, we still worship the same God and His Divine Son, our Saviour. I quarrel with no man’s faith, or seek, if unasked, to guide him into a different road to salvation ; but”—and as he spoke, the dark eyes of the priest seemed to search into the inmost recesses of his hearer’s heart—“but I wish to maintain the children of our faith firm and steadfast in the religion and the observances of their forefathers.”

“May I ask you, padre,” impatiently interrupted our hero, “to what this tends?”

“I will tell you, my son,” calmly replied the priest, “and will not detain you long ; for I know I speak to one on whom this family look with sincere and heartfelt affection—one whose heart is capable of performing great and good actions. Sully not, then, the reputation so honourably gained, to bring down upon yourself the divine wrath, and load your own conscience with a crime that must poison every hour of your future existence. Steal not, my son, a soul from salvation ; rend not the heart of those who look upon you as one of themselves ; rob them not of their child, to embitter their old age, with the cruel knowledge that they nourished a serpent in their bosom to sting them, and poison with its breath a child devoted to heaven, in a moment of pious inspiration.”

“I have not interrupted you, sir priest,” said Vernon, haughtily and coldly, as the padre, evidently greatly excited, paused, “because I wished to hear you to the end ; had I never seen or heard of you till this moment, I might, perhaps, understand what you have said—though

misapplied to my actions ; but knowing, as I do, that you have acted towards me in a manner quite unjustifiable, and wholly incompatible with the sacred character you represent—”

“What do you mean, senor ?” hastily interrupted the priest, his eyes sparkling, and his whole meek bearing vanishing.

“I mean this, priest,” sternly returned our hero, his eyes meeting the monk’s with as fierce a flash as his own,—“I mean that you have not only played the spy upon me and my actions, but that you also, by false representations, endeavoured to work upon the credulity of a person attached to me, in order to make the servant a spy upon his master.”

The priest’s eyes were cast down in a moment, and his sallow cheek flushed ; then, quietly looking up, he meekly replied : “All means are lawful to gain an end ; when the benefit will be in favour of our sacred religion, the result justifies the means. You may, perhaps, wonder, that knowing your projects, I do not at once frustrate them, when it would be so easy to do so ; but it is not my wish to act with severity, and thus point out the daughter of a noble house, to the community she dwells amongst, as a subject of reproach and deserving of punishment. Think of what I say, my son. I beseech you to do so ; take the night to consider. What I know, I will keep to myself ; and I pray you meet me here this time to-morrow, and—”

“Father,” interrupted Vernon, with an internal thrill of triumph rushing through his frame, “I will reflect on what you say ; perhaps by this time to-morrow you will think differently of me and my actions.”

Without another syllable, and not even heeding the words said by the priest in reply, he left the chamber and sought his own.

A messenger reached the castle during the evening, from Cordova, bringing word that the Bishop of Oveida would not arrive till morning. This intelligence relieved our hero’s mind of a great anxiety ; and retiring early to

his chamber, he sat down with paper, pens, &c. before him, immersed in deep reverie. Suddenly starting up, as the deep-toned bell of the castle clock tolled the tenth hour of the night, he seized his pen, and remained for more than an hour writing. Having folded two letters, he directed, sealed, and left them on the table; from a cabinet he took a brace of English pistols, carefully loaded them, and placed them in his vest. Having done this, he arranged other articles lying about in a cabinet, which he locked, placing the key on the top. Just then the clock tolled the twelfth hour; he started, he felt singularly agitated and uneasy as the moment arrived for action, and happening to look in a low mirror opposite, perceived that he was extremely pale. Opening the door of his chamber, he listened for a few moments; all appeared profoundly still and quiet; taking up his mantle, he threw it over his shoulders, and lighting a small lantern, extinguished the light in his room, and passing along the corridor, descended a private staircase—not used by any of the servants of the household; having reached the back hall, he continued his way without hearing or seeing anything to disturb his progress; unlocked a private door, leading out into a small court; from thence he gained the plantations, and in a few seconds more, stood beneath the deep shade of the cork wood. It was certainly not a night calculated for concealment, for the moon rode high in the clear deep blue vault above; so bright, indeed, that its silvery light pierced even through the thick branches of the mighty cork trees; and as he passed an opening, the broad bosom of the Guadalquivir appeared like a sheet of silver spread out before him.

Vernon walked fast towards the spot where he had fixed upon for the carriage to wait his arrival. It was an open glade, nearly a quarter of a mile from the main road to Jaen. In the middle of this space was an obelisk or pillar, commemorating some remarkable event in Moorish history.

The youth he had hired at Jaen was true and faithful to his word. He was there with his berlin and two very

fast mules. Seeing the carriage in readiness, Vernon felt a glow of satisfaction, and quickening his walk, soon came within sight of the lofty wall of the convent garden. As he did so, he paused, and a feeling of terrible anxiety crossed his mind, as he perceived the door in the wall leading into the convent garden was wide open, the moon's rays striking the ground beneath the lofty wall through the aperture. For a moment he paused: outside the immense wall were several ranges of low brushwood, and, except where the moon shone through the open door, the shadow thrown by the wall was dense; hastily advancing, he was startled by a low moaning sound from the bushes near him. A deep groan next smote his ear. Alarmed, he advanced to the spot, and stood for an instant horror-struck at perceiving the bodies of two men lying stretched upon the sod at his feet. One, at the moment he stooped, turned over with a groan of agony; when, with an exclamation of intense grief and dismay, Vernon threw himself beside the body, for he at once recognized his beloved friend, Leon De Haro—

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "who has committed this foul deed?" In the agony and surprise of the moment, even his beloved Ina was for a time forgotten.

As he thus knelt supporting Leon, and gazing bewildered upon the features of his dying friend, thinking whether to lift and carry him to the berlin, a figure wrapped in a mantle came through the garden door, looked for an instant at Vernon's kneeling figure, and then rapidly approached. The next moment, with a wild cry of horror, Ina threw herself beside the body, exclaiming, in a tone of frantic grief and fear, "Oh, Leon, my beloved Leon!—oh, God, can I have caused this horrid deed?"

"Ina! Ina! this is horrible!" uttered our hero, the heat drops of agony standing on his temples. Just then Leon opened his eyes, and looked fixedly into those of his wretched friend.

"Lay me down, Sidney," he uttered, in a faint, low, trembling voice. "Ah! and you too, my beloved sister. I have been foully murdered—there—stir me not—'tis agony."

Vernon laid him gently down, with a sigh of intense bitterness, while Ina's sobs rent his heart, for he plainly saw that no human power could stay the fell destroyer—death. A minute or two, and the struggle would be over.

"Sidney," gasped the sufferer, with a mighty effort, taking his sister's hand, and placing it in that of his friend, "love and cherish Ina—I was slain—oh, Father, receive my soul!" and with a sigh of agony, and a violent shudder, Leon de Haro ceased to exist, while, with a frantic cry, Ina fell senseless over the body.

The memory of that moment of agony was never forgotten by Vernon through the remainder of his life; but the next instant, he recovered his power of thought and action; there was but little time for deliberation; to delay, was to lose Ina for ever. Catching her up in his arms, he hurried back towards the obelisk to place her in the berlin; not having either time—nor, indeed, did he think of it—for examining the other body that lay within a few feet of his ill-fated friend.

Just as he passed a huge tree, and was almost within sight of the obelisk, a figure, wrapped from head to foot in a mantle, started out from the shadow of a tree, and arrested his flight, by catching him by the arm, and exclaiming, in a disguised voice,—

"Stay your flight, madman—you are betrayed and lost."

"Fool!" fiercely exclaimed Vernon, raising his right arm to strike down his detainer—"leave my path;" and the next instant, the figure would have fallen beneath his powerful arm—but stepping back, the folds of the mantle were dropped, disclosing the person of the Lady Isabella de Palafox, who exclaimed, with an intense bitterness of tone,—

"Coward, would you strike a woman?"

Vernon shook with rage—Ina was evidently recovering; with an effort he strove to calm his passion, saying,—

"Madam, this cruel conduct of yours is unavailing—I knew you not—but my determination is not to be altered;" he was moving on, when Isabella de Palafox again placed herself before him.

"Oh, infatuated man, I tell you once more, you and that weak, wretched girl are lost, if you do not heed my words. Your carriage is gone—where would you fly to—you would not ruin body and soul of that deluded girl?"

For an instant Vernon paused irresolute, and overpowered with conflicting passions. Ina had regained her senses, and clung to his arm with trembling horror and terror.

"To your malice, then, madam," said our hero, bitterly, "I owe the loss of my carriage."

"I have only done my duty, sir," returned the maiden, haughtily; "it now remains for you to consider yours. Let her return to her convent; do not hesitate, or you are both lost."

"No, madam, I do not hesitate," returned our hero, recovering his presence of mind, and having resolved how to act, "I will defeat your malice yet—one means of flight yet remains;" and taking Ina's arm, who could scarcely stand with the feeling of despair and horror that filled her mind and heart, he began to retrace his steps towards the river.

"Stir another step, infatuated man," exclaimed the Lady Isabella, barring his way, "and I call for assistance; at a very short distance I have help."

Dropping Ina's arm, with a sudden movement, Vernon instantly enveloped the startled Lady Isabella with his mantle, completely preventing her crying out.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Ina, clasping her hands, her eyes streaming with tears, "this is dreadful—oh, Sidney, Sidney, hurt her not. Let me perish if necessary—but save yourself."

"Beloved of my heart," whispered Vernon, "fear not—I will not injure her—not for worlds."

Isabella was like an infant in his arms, and her struggles useless. In a few seconds he fastened the mantle securely, and laying her gently down, tied the strings round her ankles.

"Alas! Sidney," murmured Ina, "this is useless.

We cannot fly ; better restore me to my convent—fly yourself, and forget the wretched Ina.”

“ Never, treasure of my heart, never, with life, will I give you up—exert yourself, for in a short time we can reach the boat-house ;” and passing his arm round the waist of the weeping girl, he supported her, leaving the Lady Isabella at the foot of the great cork tree. In ten minutes they reached the boat-house ; a small pleasure-boat lay chained to the bank, the chain he wrenched with a powerful jerk from the staple in the post, and bursting open the door of the boat-house, took out the mast, sails and oars belonging to her. Placing the suffering and miserable Ina in the stern, he stepped the mast—for a fine breeze began, with the setting of the moon, to blow up the river—determined to steer towards the town of Jaen, The stream at that period of the year was extremely gentle, and under its sail the boat glided swiftly along the banks—our hero, taking advantage of the slack currents, seated next Ina, strove with all a lover’s tenderness and endearments to soothe her agony of mind.

“ But how has all this occurred ?” asked Ina, with a fresh burst of sorrow. “ Who was it that so cruelly killed my beloved and unfortunate brother ?”

“ To me, dearest, the whole is a profound mystery. When I reached the gate I found my ill-fated friend and another body lying on the sod ; I had no time for even thought, so agonized was I by the discovery.”

Ina sighed ; her heart was heavy, indeed, tortured by her brother’s cruel fate,—dissatisfied with herself, fearing in her heart that her flight from her convent had some influence on her brother’s death, and that her parents would suffer fearfully the death of one child, and the desertion of the other ; though amidst all these conflicting feelings, her love was still the dominant passion of her heart,

The night, though passed in tears, was in some degree soothed, perhaps, by the unceasing attention and devotion of her lover—whose own thoughts were miserable and

conflicting enough. What with rowing and sailing, by the time the sun rose, they had gained three leagues up the stream ; and in the distance, the spires of Jaen were visible above the trees. A mile further, on the right bank of the river, was the pretty village of Adamaz ; and at a small inn, he knew the village possessed, he resolved to leave Ina, till he procured a berlin and mules from Jaen. When near the village they disembarked, and after sinking the boat, proceeded on, walking, till they were attracted by a very neat cottage, situated near the river, in the midst of a very pretty garden, in which an elderly female, and a young girl about ten years of age, were busy cutting flowers ; and Vernon proposed that Ina should rest, whilst he went on to Jaen to procure a carriage.

The good dame, when spoken to, most willingly admitted the worn-out wanderer ; indeed, the first look she cast upon her strikingly lovely face, pale and sorrowful as one night's intense fretting had made it, caused her to feel highly interested, and expressing her fears that she had overtired herself with walking,—led her within the door, telling her to try and get an hour's rest, whilst the gentleman went to Jaen.

“ You can have a very nice light carriage,” she observed, “ at Adamaz, which is nearly a league before you come to Jaen ; we are quite close to the Cordova road, and there's a muleteer there, named Pedro Panza, who travels that road every Tuesday and Friday, and to-day is Thursday ; you will be sure to get his berlin.”

“ That will just do,” returned Vernon, slipping a couple of crowns into the vine-dresser's wife's hand ; “ take good care of the lady ; get her to sleep if you can, and afterwards prepare some slight refreshment, against I come back.”

This was promised ; and whispering some loving words of hope and consolation in the ear of the dejected Ina, Vernon departed for the village of Adamaz.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was nine o'clock in the evening of a day in the early part of June. In a back parlour of the Greyhound Inn, in the city of Bath, sat Luigi Goldoni ; he was now well dressed, but still cadaverous and thin in face and figure ; there was a good supper before him, and a bottle of wine and another of brandy beside him. Two interviews had already taken place between him and the late Earl of Delmont's valet, George Salvati, who had not found the Italian felon quite so easy a subject to impose on as he had imagined. As yet Salvati kept his secret to himself, or, at least, shared it only with Goldoni ; his object being to make the latter think he was negotiating with him in the name of the countess ; who, he asserted, was willing to give him a certain sum, provided he embarked for America at once.

Now, the sum mentioned by Salvati was scornfully rejected by Goldoni, who insisted on receiving no less than ten thousand pounds ; which the other treated as ridiculous, ten thousand pounds being the sum he intended himself to extort from the countess as the price of his silence. Though aware of the supposed heir being the child of Goldoni, Salvati knew very little more, and was not at all aware that the mother was dead—murdered by the very villain he was in treaty with. He was also waiting an opportunity of speaking with the countess ; the death of the earl was yet too recent to name his discovery, and he, therefore, thought to keep Goldoni for a little while longer in suspense ; hoping some chance circumstance would reveal to him something more of his history ; and chanced actually performed for him the very thing he wanted.

Passing, one morning, before the pump-rooms, in Bath—then in the height of its glory ; he observed a foreign

gentleman, with an extremely beautiful girl leaning on his arm, leave the great room and enter a handsome carriage waiting for them. The gentleman's attendant, after closing the door of the carriage, was mounting behind, when his features caught the attention of George Salvati. They recognised each other at once; and just as the carriage drove off, the stranger said, bending down from his seat, 'We are at the White Hart; let me see you this evening.' This man also was of Italian origin, and had been in early youth a great companion and comrade of George Salvati. Now it happened that this man, whose name was Henry Barratti, had accompanied Lord Edgehill's eldest son to the continent, and was resident in Naples during the same winter that Sidney Vernon encountered Luigi Goldoni in so strange a manner.

Salvati was glad to see his friend again, and without thinking of anything but the pleasure of meeting him, went the following evening to the White Hart, to spend an hour or two with his old comrade.

As they sat conversing over a bottle of wine, Salvati asked his friend who the distinguished-looking foreigner was; and remarked also on the loveliness of his lady.

"Ah! E Vero, Amico," said Barratti, "she was the 'beauty of Naples,' and caused the death of more than one lover; she was a great heiress too,—compelled to make a hasty flight with her present husband."

"How so?" questioned Salvati.

"Well, I will tell you. Her name was Gavotti; she was ward to an Italian signor, whose son fell desperately in love with her, but she was in love with my present master, who was an officer of high family, in the King of Naples' body guard, but without fortune. Now the guardian's son is a most profligate, licentious youth—indeed, he is said to have committed high treason and other crimes. I was in Naples at this time with Lord George, but got ill of a fever; he was recalled suddenly, and left me behind. When I got well, I chanced to get into the service of my present master, on account of my speaking English, for he then had it in his head to fly

with the heiress to England ; but one night he was set upon by assassins, and would have been killed but for a young Englishman who came to his assistance, and drove the rascals off—this gentleman's name was Vernon—”

“Vernon !” repeated Salvati, with some surprise—“Why, that's the late Earl of Delmont's name, that young man must be the late Earl's nephew ;” and then a strange thought entered Salvati's head, but his friend continued,

“Very like ; for I remember, a few weeks afterwards, hearing that this Mr. Vernon had been nearly assassinated by a man named Goldoni, who afterwards murdered his wife, and then contrived to escape.”

“Murdered his wife, say you ?” exclaimed the astonished Salvati. “Are you sure his name was Goldoni ?”

“Quite sure,” replied Barratti. “Why, did you ever hear the name ?”

“I think I did,” observed Salvati ; “the late Earl of Delmont spent a winter in Naples. I think he had an Italian of that name living with him during his stay”

“It's very possible ; however, let me finish my master's adventures. After this Mr. Vernon's departure from Naples, my master contrived to force this young man, who attempted to assassinate him, to give him a meeting, and my master left his adversary mortally wounded on the spot where they fought, and three days afterwards he fled to Rome, where the Signora Gavotti and her maid joined us, having escaped from her guardian's house ; they were married at Rome ; in six months she came of age, and a clever lawyer soon obtained her fortune. As it would be some time before he could show himself in Naples, my master determined to visit England. So to England we came, and intend residing here for the winter. There is a little romance for you, George ; nothing like visiting foreign places, everything in this country is so matter of fact—so business like—that one day will do for a sample of the whole three hundred and sixty-five, eh, George ?”

“Well, I must confess,” said Salvati, helping himself to some wine, “that although we are both of Italian

origin, it is by no means pleasant to have now and then the chance of a stiletto in your ribs, for every little peccadillo you may commit in Cupid's name; but you are quite sure that fellow who murdered his wife was called Goldoni?"

"Per Baccho, quite sure—he was an escaped felon, besides."

"The devil he was!" exclaimed Salvati, opening his eyes.

"Oh yes, I heard a good deal of talk about that rascal at the time, and I think that Mr. Vernon—who, by the bye, I saw several times—one of the handsomest young men you ever saw—I can tell you, he was a deuce of a fellow among the Neapolitan beauties. But as I was saying, Mr. Vernon offered a very large reward for the apprehension of this galley slave, Goldoni; but no use."

After some further conversation, and finishing another bottle of wine, the two friends separated.

Now the intelligence Salvati gained from his friend Barratti was, he considered, most important, though he shuddered to think he was actually leaguering himself with a murderer; for, after all, Salvati had a kind of conscience of his own. But he thought he could now easily frighten Goldoni into any terms, and make him quit the country at once. At times it entered his fertile brain, that he might perform an act of justice, and at the same time gain a greater reward by selling his secret to the real Earl of Delmont; but then where was he to find Mr. Vernon? and before he could communicate with him—allowing he discovered where he was—the golden opportunity might be lost; whereas, the Countess of Delmont was sure to grant almost any demand to save herself and family from public reproach and exposure. He therefore appointed another meeting with Goldoni, on the night named at the opening of this chapter, and at nine o'clock, we now return to Goldoni, in the back parlour of the "Greyhound," in Globe Alley. The supper had been removed, more wine placed on the table—and the miserable felon was waiting for George Salvati, who latterly, he had begun to think, knew very little in reality

about him—of his wife's fate he could know nothing, and he could use her name to extort more money. As she must be bought as well as himself, he had slyly tried, by chance questioning, to find out if the valet knew anything of his previous history, and by his answers, he felt confident his knowledge was but trifling; he also began to think that the valet was working a little for himself, as well as for the Countess of Delmont, and this night he had determined to bring matters to a close. Just as he had come to this resolution, the door opened, and George Salvati entered the room.

The two men, as they greeted one another, looked keenly into each other's face, and then the new comer sad down, saying,—

"You are looking better than you did a few days ago, Mr. Goldoni, and I hope to-night we shall come to some final arrangement."

"That will all depend on how my offers are received. I told you, Mr. Salvati, two or three days ago, what I required to carry me to America. I am anxious to quit this country, it doesn't agree with me," and he laughed in a mocking kind of tone.

"It ought to agree with you better than your own country," said George Salvati, drily.

A slight colour came into the cadaverous face of Goldoni, as he caught the glance of Salvati's sharp, keen dark eyes. "Well, let us to business," he said, after an awkward pause. "How much will her ladyship give to get eternally rid of me?—that's the question. I have asked only ten thousand pounds, and it's d——d hard, after all the sacrifices myself and wife are willing to make, she should think of cutting me down; recollect, she holds a property of more than thirty thousand a-year during her life; that's pretty good interest for ten thousand pounds, eh, amico?"

"You don't seem rightly to understand the case, my friend; but you mentioned your wife; pray, where have you left the good lady?—she must be uneasy; and how will she join you if you sail for America?"

"I told you before," said Goldoni, with a dark frown stealing over his harsh features, "we don't agree, except in one thing; and that is, to keep clear of each other. I will send her a thousand pounds, and neither you or I shall ever hear more of her."

"Well," said Salvati, "say two thousand for yourself, and one thousand for your wife: not that I think the good lady will ever receive a shilling of it."

"Why do you think that?" fiercely interrupted Goldoni, with a start. "Not that I will take three thousand pounds! But you are playing me false, curse me if you are not! I suspected you the other night. Now, by——"

"There, don't put yourself in a passion," said Salvati, coolly. "'Tis you are playing me false. You have no wife. She's dead; and I know how she died." As he said this, he looked the baffled ruffian steadily in the face.

Goldoni's features grew livid with rage and vexation. He clenched his hands, while his eyes glared fiercely round the room, as if searching for some weapon; but suddenly he seemed to recover himself, and pouring out a tumbler of brandy, with scarcely a wine glassful of water in it, drank it down; and then, looking his companion fearlessly in the face, said: "You seem to have picked up some information respecting me since we last met, that induces you to think you can bully me into your own terms; but, curse me if you aren't—mistaken! I don't care that!"—(and he snapped his fingers)—"about what you know of me. I'm not answerable in this cursed country for what's done in my own. I know that much law. So, now, I tell you once for all, if your mistress won't stump down ten thousand pounds in a day or so, I'll blow the whole thing, curse me if I don't!—and ruin her reputation, if she ever had any; take my son, and go to America, without her cursed gold, which first tempted me to evil. Do you hear me?"

"Quite distinctly," returned Salvati, calmly helping himself to a glass of wine; "and I must say, for one

guilty of murder, and just escaped from the galleys, with two of the Neapolitan secret police within less than a thousand yards, you speak boldly enough."

Luigi Goldoni fell back in his chair ghastly pale, his features working under the terrible fear that Salvati's words caused him. He did not, for one moment, doubt the truth of Salvati's assertion, for he knew that he had been tracked to France by agents of the police, though he never, till now, dreamed that he could be followed to England. But Salvati's suddenly acquired knowledge of his crimes confirmed him in his belief; and he sat staggered, bewildered, completely at the mercy of his crafty countryman. A smile of triumph sat upon the lip of the valet, as he saw, at a glance, the success of his bold scheme. "I have him now," said he to himself. "I will make him take two thousand pounds—perhaps less."

"How knew you this?" gasped Goldoni, looking eagerly towards the door, as if he expected the police agents to enter the room.

"I will tell you," returned the other; "and I will befriend you still, provided you listen to reason."

"Only ship me for America, and swear not to betray me, and I will take—take"—his lips were livid, he was forced again to have recourse to the brandy—"I will take the three thousand pounds."

"Good; you are becoming sensible."

"But tell me," hastily interrupted the felon, "does any one besides yourself and her ladyship know of my being in the city?"

"Not a soul, upon my honour. The two police agents landed at Bristol yesterday, and are on their way to London—where they suspect you are. You see, they tracked you pretty close; and the reward offered by Mr. Vernon for your apprehension has sharpened their appetites."

"Curse him!" bitterly and fiercely exclaimed Goldoni. "If I had blown his brains out when I had my carbine within three yards of his head, this would not have occurred."

As George Salvati knew nothing of that circumstance, he wisely held his tongue.

"How," demanded Goldoni, reviving his spirits by the help of the brandy, "how did you hear of those two agents?"

"Oh! they made no secret of their object in coming to this country. They were at the White Hart yesterday; I was there to see a countryman of ours; they were speaking to a Neapolitan signor—I dare say you may remember the belle of Naples—the Signora Gavotti?"

"Ha! I do well. Is she here?"

"Yes. Married. A friend of mine travelled as valet with them to this country. It was he who told me of these men—the agents of the police."

The felon started, and looked up for a moment, a strange smile resting on his features, saying: "Why, curse this business! I might have been nabbed. My name is known at the post-office."

"It was rather green for an old hand to travel under his own name," said George Salvati, with a light laugh. "Eh?"

"Why, curse it! Who the devil would have imagined that the agents of our police would think of following a fellow into this country? But, didn't you say that they went on to London without making any inquiries after me, here, eh?"

"Oh! They made no inquiries in this city. I suppose they thought, that like all gentlemen seeking retirement, London would be your residence for a while. But now let us arrange for your departure from this kingdom to America, for you may rest satisfied they will eventually, through the aid of the police of this country, track you to this place. Now, I have made all the inquiries requisite, and I find that there is a large barque, lying in the Bristol Docks, already laden, and ready to sail in three or four days. I will meet you in Bristol on Wednesday evening—this is Monday. There is a quiet inn, called the Blue Boar, on the quay, opposite the

drawbridge; any one will direct you to it; Thursday morning I will accompany you on board the 'Lockwood'—the name of the barque. She is destined for New York. All your expenses will be paid, and you shall receive two thousand pounds in hand, on your taking a solemn oath never to return to this country. Will this arrangement suit you? Ha! there's eleven o'clock striking; I must be stirring. My horse is at the George. Now, have you anything to say against this plan?"

"If you could get her ladyship to add another thousand," said Goldoni, "I should be able to manage matters. However, I will leave it to her generosity. I will be at the Blue Boar on Wednesday. But have you any spare cash about you? I want a few pounds."

"I can give you ten pounds on account," said Salvati, taking out his pocket-book, "for I changed a cheque to-day."

Goldoni eyed the book and his companion with a strange sinister smile, and with a look of deadly malice in his glance, when not observed, that would have startled Salvati, had he looked up; but selecting a couple of notes, he handed them to Goldoni, and then rose, and, as he left the room, said:

"Remember, the Blue Boar, near the bridge. You had better leave this place in the morning."

"Never fear, never fear," returned the felon, with a knowing leer at the departing Salvati. "This time to-morrow I will be at the Blue Boar; so, good night."

As soon as the door closed after the exit of Salvati, Goldoni's eyes flashed, and he ground his teeth with rage, shaking his clenched hand, muttering to himself—"Curse you! I'm up to you, with all your cunning. So you thought to make me think the Neapolitan police were after me, and I was near being fool enough to believe it! Ha! ha! ha!" and the felon laughed as he finished the brandy. "He outwitted himself," he continued, muttering; "he gained all he knows from that friend of his. I remember him well. He was at Naples the same time that I —— Ha!" with a start, the convict sprung

to his feet—"it's time to be stirring;" and walking over to the little sideboard in the room, he took up a carving-knife of a very formidable description, with a deer's horn for a handle. He felt the point, then the edge, as, with a hideous laugh, he muttered: "When I bought this, this morning, I little thought it would so soon be wanted." Then thrusting it into his breast, after wrapping the point in a thick fold of cloth; and taking up his hat, he walked into the bar, paid his bill, said he was going to London by the night coach, which left the George at half-past eleven, and, without another word, passed into the street.

He had now been a week or more in Bath, and knew his way perfectly; first, proceeding, as fast as he could walk, towards the village of Weston, in which direction the road ran leading to the mansion of the late Earl of Delmont. It was a soft warm night, with a gentle rain falling, and a slight mist.

With his vile heart full of terrible vengeance and wickedness, Goldoni passed through the quiet village of Weston, without encountering a human being. It was near midnight, when he paused in his rapid walk, almost at the top of a steep hill, in the direction of Delmont Castle. It was a narrow though good road, bounded on one side by a high bank, covered with brush-wood and brambles; on the other, by a stone wall six or seven feet high, the boundary wall of the Castle Park.

Concealing himself by crouching under a thick bush, Goldoni pulled the knife from his vest, and seized the handle with a grasp of iron, and the malice of a fiend; anxiously he listened, with his head to the ground, and thus he remained, till the sound of a horse in full trot at the foot of the hill, reached his ear. As the rider ascended the hill, he slackened his pace, and Goldoni, from his hiding-place, could clearly perceive, through the drizzling rain, George Salvati, letting his horse walk slowly up the ascent, himself humming a tune to beguile the way.

Just as he passed the bush, Goldoni started out,

sprung at the horse, and drove his long knife deep into the side of the ill-fated rider. With a terrible cry of agony, the unfortunate Salvati threw his arms wildly into the air, while the startled horse turned sharply round, and rearing at the same time, Salvati fell heavily to the ground. Goldoni made a snatch at the bridle and caught it—checking the beast in its flight—and immediately fastening the affrighted animal to a branch, hastened to glut his eyes with his victim's sufferings, and rifle his pockets; as he approached, Salvati was lying on one side, leaning on his elbow, evidently not dead: with a withering curse, Goldoni again grasped his knife, and stepping up, said,—

“So, you thought to make a fool of Luigi Goldoni! but you have not had your quietus yet, eh?”

Just as he stooped, raising his knife, Salvati, with a groan, lifted his arm—there was a flash—a report, and Goldoni reeled, strove to recover himself, and then fell with a hideous howl within a few feet of his victim. His ruling passion, strong even in death—for he was mortally wounded—was vengeance: writhing along the ground like a bruised serpent, with hand still grasping the knife, he reached the ill-fated valet, who beheld him crawling towards him, totally unable to move or utter a cry for help, for the blood flowed copiously from the wound he had received; with an inward groan of bitter anguish, he prayed to Heaven for forgiveness, for he saw that his fate was sealed. Meanwhile, Goldoni slowly dragged his body along the ground, feeling he was mortally wounded, and that life was ebbing fast, and he gnashed his teeth and cursed as he crawled along, writhing with agony, the perspiration falling in drops from his forehead; fearing to die before he could reach his victim.

Salvati, as he felt the murderer grasp the hair of his head, exerted all the remaining power left in his body, to struggle for the little of life yet in him; and the two, in this fearful encounter, rolled over each other, the curses of Goldoni hissing in his victim's ear. Twice did he

drive his knife into Salvati's breast, and then his horrid laugh of triumph sounded strangely on the still air of that summer's night; as still grasping the hair of his dead victim, he strove to draw his breath. The next moment he fell over the body with a smothered execration; a violent shudder shook his frame, and then all became still, the murderer and the murdered lay side by side. The light rain ceased, the clouds broke away, and a stream of silvery light fell upon the unhallowed spot, and upon the distorted faces of the dead. On a branch close by a nightingale perched, and presently, in the still air, the sweet notes of the night bird fell clear and beautiful. A sky of unclouded brilliancy followed, the stars sparkled and shone in the clear blue vault above, they also faded away before the waking of the mighty luminary of the day. And then the cheerful whistle of the daily labourer going to his honest toil was heard, and a man in a smock frock, with a pickaxe and shovel on his shoulder, turned the summit of the hill; he began to descend, and his gaze rested on the motionless bodies stretched out before him. With an exclamation of terror the man dropped his tools, and fled back to the little village, to rouse its inmates with his tale of horror.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ON the morning following the murder of the unfortunate and misguided George Salvati, the Countess of Delmont was seated at breakfast in her own apartment, with her daughter Mary, now her only companion.

The countess had not left her room since the death of her husband, for with all his faults she had dearly loved him, and had perilled soul and body to gratify his pride and forward his views, though strongly against her

wishes and feelings. His sudden death had been a terrible blow to her, particularly as she could not divest herself of the idea that it was occasioned, in some way or other, through the one fatal error of his life. When she had roused herself from the first shock, and recovered the power of thought, so as to bring her mind to ponder over the past, she had come to the firm determination of restoring the estates and title to the rightful owner. But how to do so without incurring shame and reproach, and bringing disgrace upon a hitherto untarnished name, was yet to be thought of; nothing was at present determined but how to provide for the child. On the morning in question, pale and careworn, she sat with her affectionate daughter, Mary, who she little suspected was aware of the oppressive secret agitating and weighing upon her mind.

While they continued almost in silence at their repast the chamber door suddenly opened, and Mrs. Thomson, the countess's principal and favourite attendant, entered the room, and with a face deadly pale, her whole manner and appearance nervously agitated, exclaimed:

"Oh, my lady! anything so horrible has never happened before. Mr. Salvati has been found murdered on the hill above Weston, and another body is lying alongside of him—the body of one quite a stranger to every one. It is supposed to be that of the man who murdered Salvati."

"Good God!" exclaimed the countess, falling back in her chair, half-fainting, "what is all this you are saying?"

Both Mary and Mrs. Thomson hurried, the one to support her mistress, the other to administer restoratives.

"Pardon me, my lady," said Mrs. Thomson; "I was so horror-struck myself by the intelligence, that I forgot everything like caution. But there is no manner of doubt of the murder; all the village of Weston is in violent agitation."

The countess, when she had recovered the shock, saw that Mary was very pale, and looked much agitated.

"This is very horrible," said the countess, "very

horrible. You had better tell Mr. Phillips, the steward, and the butler, to go at once to the village, and hear what will come out on the inquest; and send some one to Salvati's father; but let them act cautiously, for he is a very old man, highly respectable and honourable in his conduct through life." She ceased speaking with a sigh, and looking up, perceived her daughter's eyes fixed upon her with a tender and most affectionate look; and when Mrs. Thomson had withdrawn to fulfil her instructions, she said to Mary, who seemed quite overcome by the frightful double murder she had just heard:

"My dear child, this horrible occurrence has affected you as much as myself; my nerves were already shattered. I feel, perhaps, more singularly depressed and uneasy about this occurrence, horrible as it is, than it appears to demand. I have a foreboding of future trouble, and whether it is my weak state, or some kind of prompting of fate, but I do verily believe this terrible murder has not taken place for the mere purpose of robbery."

Mary rose from her chair, and suddenly throwing her arms round her mother's neck, said, in a low tremulous voice:

"Oh, dearest mother! will you pardon me?" and the tears fell from her soft loving eyes, as they met those of her mother. "I know the terrible secret that is breaking your heart and spirit. Oh, mother! dear, dear mother! I have long known it; and I have heard these few nights past from your own lips, in your disturbed slumbers, words that showed how unhappy were your waking thoughts."

"Dear child," replied her mother, kissing Mary's cheeks, with much affection, and some emotion, "though a little surprised at your knowing a secret that has these last few years cost me much bitterness of heart, and sincere and deep regret, yet I am glad you do know it; for though I was resolved in a few days to tell you all about it, and consult how to undo and repair the evil that has been committed, I am thankful that one humiliation is spared me—that of confessing to my own child. And

now I will relate, before I ask how you came to know this horrible secret, the reason why I fear this horrible deed has some reference to the unhappy subterfuge my poor husband induced me to commit.

"On the morning of your father's sudden and awful death, I was leaving the conservatory, and crossing the corridor leading to the study, when I met James, carrying some letters on a salver to his master. I expected one from your sister, and as James held the salver towards me, I perceived there were four letters, but none for me. The address of one of the letters startled me, for I remembered the hand-writing, though I had not seen it for four or five years. I, however, made no remark, and James carried the letters into the study." The countess sighed, paused a moment, and then continued :

"After your poor father's death three letters were brought to me, with their seals unbroken. The fourth, the hand-writing of which I had recognized, was not to be found, though James remembered very well taking in four. Now, my dear Mary, the missing letter, I feel satisfied, was from an Italian—in fact, from the father of the child ; and I begin to think, from a previous letter we had on that subject, that this man, this Italian, whose name is Goldoni, has made his way to England.

"During a conversation I had with your father, some days previous to his melancholy death, he himself remarked that he feared Goldoni would find his way into this country, for the purpose, no doubt, of extorting money.

"George Salvati was the first person who entered the library after hearing your father fall. I suspect that he obtained possession of that letter, corresponded with Goldoni, and they have killed each other."

"Oh !" exclaimed Mary, looking dismayed, "if such be the case, some unfortunate disclosure may take place at the inquest—some letters or papers may be found on their persons."

"It is that idea that distracts and alarms me," said the countess ; "fully resolved to restore to Sidney Vernon his rights, I yet would save the family name, and the

memory of my unfortunate husband, from reproach and disgrace. A letter—a single line might betray all.”

Mother and daughter remained silent, occupied with their own thoughts for several moments, till disturbed by Mrs. Thomson entering the room, when they saw by her countenance that she had some intelligence to impart; and the countess, very anxious to hear anything relating to the late horrible affair, questioned her as to whether any person had returned from Weston.

“Yes, my lady; James has just come in from the post. He says the inquest is sitting at the Star public house, in Weston. The people say the wretch who murdered poor George Salvati is a foreigner, an Italian.”

The countess could scarcely repress a groan, as her eyes met the anxious, affectionate gaze of her child; but Mrs. Thompson, full of her subject, took no notice, and went on—

“They must have had a hard struggle, my lady. Poor George had a pistol in one hand, and the murderer a great long sharp knife. But the steward will be back after the inquest, and he will bring full particulars. The poor old father has been sent for; it will half, if not entirely, kill him.”

It was late in the evening before the steward and butler returned from Weston; and the countess at once demanded all the particulars from them.

It will be quite sufficient to say, that after several hours' investigation and examination of witnesses, no single particular was learned further than that George Salvati was found murdered by an Italian vagrant, named Luigi Goldoni, for a letter was found in his pocket directed to Luigi Goldoni, Post Office, Bath. The letter was signed George Salvati, and contained but few lines:—

“I will meet you to-night at the Grey-hound, in Globe Alley, at ten o'clock. I trust you will have then made up your mind as to my offer of two thousand pounds.

“GEORGE SALVATI.”

This was sufficiently mysterious to the coroner and all assembled; they could make nothing of it.

The people of the Greyhound testified to George Salvati having passed an hour the previous night at their house, with the Italian; and the latter leaving the inn immediately after his departure, stating that he was going to London by the half-past eleven o'clock coach. The cutler whose name was on the knife, testified to the deceased having purchased the article from him. The surgeon stated that George Salvati owed his death to the stab of a knife, and that the Italian was killed by a pistol ball, though his right lung, &c. &c. &c. A verdict was accordingly returned, to the effect that George Salvati was murdered by an Italian, of the supposed name of Goldoni; but why, or wherefore, remained unknown.

As usual, on such occasions, the people amused themselves with a thousand surmises as to the murder of the unfortunate man; the most reasonable supposition was, that the Italian murdered Salvati for the purpose of plundering him of the large sum of money he had about him; but the Bristol paper thought differently. A very long article appeared in the "Patriot," in which the case was argued at great length. This statement declared that there was evidently a union of some kind existing between Salvati and the Italian. There was a question of two thousand pounds between them. George Salvati appeared desirous that Goldoni should take the sum of two thousand pounds for some purpose or other, and that Goldoni evidently expected more. Now it was clearly proved that Goldoni arrived in Bath in a state of wretched destitution—in fact, half starved, and in rags. The post-master declared that he saw him post a letter, addressed to the late Earl of Delmont. He also stated that he was at the window of the post-office, after having told the Italian that there was no letter for him, and saw him and heard him accost Doctor Marchmont, and ask him, in a tone of despair, "was it true that the Earl of Delmont was dead?" And on being told he was, he looked as if struck with consternation by the intelligence.

Another person examined at the inquest—a Jew—who recognised the body of the Italian, stated that he came to his shop in rags, purchased good garments, and paid for them out of a five-pound note.

“Now all these circumstances combined,” continued the article in the paper, “are singularly mysterious, and clearly prove that the mere amount of sixty or seventy pounds on the person of the unfortunate Salvati could not be the only object of the villain murdering the unfortunate man, because George Salvati was quite willing to pay him a sum of two thousand pounds. Now, how could a person in the situation of George Salvati have so large a sum to bestow for any purpose such a miscreant could perform? Altogether,” concluded the article, “this murder is, as we before asserted, of a very suspicious and mysterious nature; and we fully expect, before long, to discover some clue to unravel it.”

This paragraph was copied into most of the leading journals of the day, and met the eye of the Countess of Delmont, in the columns of the “Bath Herald.”

She grew very sick as she read it; and retiring to her chamber, was found by her daughter in a violent paroxysm of grief. Mary strove all in her power to sooth and calm her despair.

“We must quit this country, dear mother, and at once. Let it be known that your health, and the child’s health, require a milder climate for the winter. Announce your intention of spending the next few months in Malta; take only Mrs. Thompson and the boy’s attendant with us. We shall, at Malta, be able to gain any port of Italy we please.”

“But, my beloved child,” interrupted the mother, “there will be a terrible difficulty in getting this unfortunate boy finally disposed of, and well provided for. You do not see the difficulties that lie in the way. He is now four years old, is sharp, quick, and intelligent; knows his name, and future rank: how will this difficulty be got over? If you give him to any one, with a large sum of money for his future benefit, you place yourself

in that person's power. His birth has been formally registered in Naples; he has been universally acknowledged as our heir; the father and mother are both dead. If we entrust him to any one who would be capable of taking advantage of the child's knowledge of who he supposes himself to be, the title and estates might hereafter be disputed; and without my confession to the imposture practised, I think your cousin would find it impossible to deny his apparent rights."

Mary looked dismayed. She had not taken the same view of the question as her mother; and having heard her, she remained several moments silent and in deep thought; then, suddenly looking up, she said, eagerly: "But, dear mother, you forget the child speaks English; and, at his early age, the remembrances of such early childhood will be soon forgotten."

"Such may be the case, certainly," said the slightly-relieved countess. "We must be guided by circumstances; and, strange as it may appear, I will take no domestic of any kind from this country. The child is quite manageable. I can procure a passage to Malta in one of our frigates, by writing to Lord ——."

"It would look strange, dear mother, to live without attendants," observed Mary. "You had better take Mrs. Thompson and Sarah; they will be quite sufficient; and when at Malta, we can be guided, as you say, by circumstances."

Three weeks after this conversation, one of the fashionable morning papers announced the departure of the Countess of Delmont and the honourable Mary Vernon, and the young heir, for Malta, on board His Majesty's frigate "Pylades," intending to pass the winter in Malta, for the benefit of the health of the countess and the young earl, who required a warmer climate than England, to recover him from the effects of the hooping-cough. But the fashionable morning paper of that day was quite mistaken with respect to the vessel the Countess of Delmont left England in.

On reaching Portsmouth, her ladyship was waited upon

by the Honourable Captain Fitzroy, Commander of the "Pylades," who, in the most polite manner, informed her that his state cabin was entirely at her service; but that, unfortunately, he could not sail for a fortnight, owing to the pilot having allowed the frigate to touch heavily in coming into the harbour, so that he was forced to put the ship into a dry dock to examine the injury she had received. The countess felt this unexpected delay disagreeable; and hearing that a remarkably handsome brig was to leave the next day for Leghorn, having very superior accommodations, she agreed with the captain for the entire use of the cabin; and having arranged everything, she had her effects transported on board the *Water Witch*, to the great vexation of the Honourable Captain Fitzroy, who appeared deeply to regret the loss of the society of the beautiful young lady, who he hoped to have secured as his passenger.

With a favourable breeze, the *Water Witch* got under weigh, and the countess, her daughter, and the false heir, left England for a foreign land.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WE left Sidney Vernon proceeding to the village of Adamaz, for the purpose of hiring some kind of carriage, having left Ina de Haro in the vine-dresser's cottage. Following the directions given to him, he found the domicile of Pedro Panza, the muleteer, and speedily agreed with him for a very tolerable kind of calesh, and a pair of mules to carry them to Andero, thus avoiding Jaen.

On returning to the cottage with the carriage, he learned that Ina, worn out with fatigue and grief, was sleeping; rejoiced at this circumstance, he waited patiently till she awoke, which she did in less than two hours.

After partaking of some slight refreshment, and rewarding their good-natured hostess, they set out on their journey, and reached Andero while it was yet light.

Vernon was surprised, and Ina alarmed, on entering this miserable deserted town, to find its inhabitants in a state of extreme excitement, bustle and confusion; so much so, that the arrival of a calesh, with a pair of mules, at the only posada or inn the place possessed, actually attracted but little attention. The street was filled with a promiscuous rabble of all sizes, ages, and sex. The males were forming themselves into what they were pleased to style a guerilla force, under the command of a most insignificant-looking man, a barber by trade. There was not a full suit of clothing in the whole troop; a few rusty old muskets, some without locks; a dozen or two of singularly antique pistols, with tremendous butts; long ox goads, with spikes, and an abundance of formidable looking knives, completed the armament of the force—calling themselves patriots and guerillas. This rabble was going to dispute and obstruct the advance of Dupont's veteran soldiers. Notwithstanding their miserable equipment, they were as enthusiastic and as full of *amor patriæ* as even Brutus was—and each looked upon himself individually as a future hero.

Having procured another pair of mules, Sidney Vernon succeeded in purchasing from Pedro Panza his calesh, for a sum four times its value; but this purchase he found it necessary to make, as he understood there was little chance of his being able to procure another between Andero and Malaga.

On their arrival at Malaga, Ina became extremely ill, although she tried in vain to conceal her indisposition from Sidney. He was fortunate in obtaining a comfortable lodging for her, at the cottage of a widow and her daughter, whilst he took up his abode at a small posada close by. The day after their arrival, Ina was attacked with fever, and continued seriously indisposed for nearly a fortnight, causing great distress of mind to our hero. The landlady and her daughter were unremitting in their

attention, and gave almost hourly report of the progress of the invalid. At the expiration of a fortnight, however, the fever abated, and Ina rapidly gained strength and when Vernon was again admitted to her presence, he found her more easy in her mind, but still very desirous of quitting Spain—dreading the power of the priesthood.

At the expiration of a month, they were married by a venerable priest, in a quiet chapel in the neighbouring village; a liberal bequest being bestowed by Vernon for the poor, which was received by the reverend man with thankfulness.

During Ina's illness, Vernon had refrained from entering the town of Malaga; and after his marriage he remained for some days, without making any enquiries concerning vessels leaving for England. Malaga being a port where many vessels from Great Britain traded, he made no doubt of finding one. Ina, however, urged him to get out of Spain before he made any attempts at a reconciliation with her family. She too well knew the power of the priesthood, and dreaded the influence of Padre Ignatius over her mother. To carry off a female intending to take the vows, was a crime that would cause the Inquisition to hurl the whole power of its vengeance on the head of the perpetrator of such an act. Vernon, too, was well aware that Spain was ruled by a bigoted and cruel priesthood. The people themselves, superstitious and credulous, were kept in their faith by a rod of iron; and though the palmy days of the detested Inquisition had passed away, and burning innocent victims at the stake was no longer a court pageant, and a holiday for the people, yet its power for a short time longer, as it turned out, was still formidable. Ina, whose love for her husband was all-powerful, trembled for his life while he remained in Spain, and daily urged him to look out for a ship going to England.

Proceeding to the harbour, to make enquiries after English vessels, Vernon was greatly surprised to find that there were only two; one had come in the day before, with a full cargo, and would not be ready for sea

for some time, and then she was bound for Trieste ; the other was under extensive repairs, having lost masts and bulwarks in a recent gale.

Aware that he could not embark in any vessel without undergoing some formalities and questions, it therefore required caution, for fear any discovery of his person should take place ; that is, if his flight with Ina was publicly noticed in the papers. Entering one of the best hotels, he called for wine ; and taking up a paper, the " Madrid Gazette," commenced reading the news.

The paper was full of the frightful excesses committed by the French. It stated that General Dupont had passed the Guadalquivir, and was advancing towards Cordova, with the intention of sacking the town, if the inhabitants closed their gates against him. Dupont had also defeated a large body of Spaniards at Alicola, under Don Pedro Agostino de Echeverra.

Turning over the paper he was thunderstruck, by seeing a paragraph headed " Sacrilege and Murder." For an instant he felt the blood recede from his cheek, and he looked round the saloon, but he was alone. On reading the particulars, he found his own name in full, with a minute description of his person, age, &c. To his horror and amazement, he was accused of the murder of Don Leon de Haro ; and after slaying the brother, of carrying off the Lady Ina de Haro, the sister, from the convent of " Our Lady of Cordova." A reward of one thousand sequins was offered for the restoration of the Lady Ina to her family ; and, further, the Inquisitor-General offered a great reward, to any one delivering up the person of the daring and heretic Englishman, to any of the authorities of the Inquisition. Sidney Vernon laid down the paper, with a movement of disgust and astonishment. It was impossible, he thought, that any of Ina's family could have ordered the insertion of so foul and false a statement, especially as Isabella de Palafox could vouch for its falsehood ; aware, as she was, that Leon de Haro was not slain by him. There was another dead body beside his murdered friend ; but not a word

was said of that circumstance; and though perfectly secure that it would be impossible to prove him guilty of Leon's murder, yet, if apprehended, God only knew whether he himself would ever be able to get out of the power of the Inquisition.

Paying for the wine, he left the hotel; and passing along the quay, he was suddenly struck with the thought, that the best plan for him to pursue, would be to embark for some port of Italy, in one of the large Catalan vessels; numbers of which, remarkable for their singular build and rig, and great speed, constantly sailed from Spain to the Italian coast, carrying on an extraordinary trade in contraband goods. The race of men, chiefly Catalonians, who navigate these craft, were notorious for their daring recklessness of life, and the wild and lawless career they led.

He was aware that his landlady was a widow of a noted contrabandist, who had lost his life at sea. She, no doubt, could inform him how to proceed, and where he could meet with some of the captains of those boats.

On returning to the cottage, he informed Ina that there was no English vessel in the harbour, that would be ready for sea for several weeks; but if they could embark for any port in Italy, it would then be easy to gain some harbour where vessels were trading to Genoa or Leghorn, or else proceed through Germany and embark for England from Holland. This last proposal was not approved, as Ina rather disliked a long land journey.

Vernon resolved to keep his wife ignorant of the intelligence he had gained from the newspaper; there was no need of distressing and alarming her, especially now that she was rapidly gaining strength and resolution to continue their flight out of Spain.

On questioning their landlady, who had guessed that their union was a secret one, but who possessed too much kindness of heart to seek to discover their history, or pry into their movements, Vernon learned that there was a certain meson or inn near the quay, where the Catalonians or contrabandists were in the habit of meeting

every evening, when their vessels put into harbour. There were, she knew, four or five then in the port; but at the same time, though she warned our hero that they were a very lawless, dangerous race, she did not consider he ran any risk, for they were greedy of gain; and as many run their vessels for the Italian ports quite empty, they would gladly hire them for the run.

The name of the inn, she said, was the "Three Mariners;" it was a large, low building, and stood at a short distance from the east mole—on the edge of a small bay or bight at the back of the mole, where vessels sometimes anchored in north-westerly gales.

Our hero resolved to go that very night, as he considered no time ought to be lost, for he knew not the moment he might attract observation. Putting on a rough jacket, and tying a large Barcelona handkerchief round his neck, with a Montero cap on his head, and kissing the cheek of his lovely wife, who felt a little uneasy at his going amongst such a set of lawless men, he set out for the "Three Mariners." It was a somewhat dark night, but he reached the quay, and following the directions of his good landlady, readily found the establishment he was seeking. As well as he could judge, it was a large, irregular-built house, at some distance from any other, with its front towards the sea, the back windows looking into the inner harbour. He walked to the edge of the cliff, and looked down upon the sandy beach beneath; there was just light enough to enable him to perceive a long low craft riding at anchor about two hundred yards from the beach. He knew the vessel to be a Catalan, by her short stout mast, and enormous length of yard, and at once resolved to enter the house: there was a long passage, with rooms on each side; just as he entered, a very good-looking girl came out from the bar, with several bottles in a basket. Vernon stopped her, asking her if a man of the name of Castados was in the house; this was the man that his landlady desired him to ask for, as he owned the largest and fastest craft out of Malaga.

"Castados," repeated the girl, looking keenly into the handsome face of the young Englishman; "oh, yes, Captain Castados. Come this way," she added, walking on, "he has a lot of his comrades with him to-night."

"Stay, my pretty girl," said our hero, slipping a piece of silver into her hands; "tell me how I may distinguish him from his comrades—I do not know him."

"Ah!" said the girl, with a light laugh, and seeming highly pleased with the gift, which she conveyed to her pocket; "there are many who have secrets with Castados—but you will easily know him; he is taller by a head than any of his comrades, about your own height; but not quite as handsome as you," she added, with a smile; "he has a great scar across his left cheek. Now follow me, for I see you are not one of them."

She went to the end of a passage and opened a door; as she did so, Vernon felt almost inclined to draw back when he looked in, but the girl said, in a low voice, "Sit down at this empty table," pushing out a small one, "shall I bring you a bottle of *good* wine and a cigar?—you will want it."

"Do so, my good girl," said our hero, sitting down beside the table, and looking carelessly about him.

The room was a very long one; seated at three long oak tables, covered with cans of wine and jars of brandy, were about a dozen men, all busy smoking and talking, except one, who was intently occupied in reading, or rather spelling, a newspaper. Of the height of the room there was no means of judging, so dense was the volume of vapour that hung over the heads of the smokers. At the extremity of the room blazed an enormous fire, notwithstanding the heat of the weather, and over this fire hung a huge cauldron, that sent forth a powerful perfume of onions and garlic. What with this smell, the great heat, and the fumes of coarse tobacco, the place was anything but agreeable to our hero; but once there, he determined to look about him. The young girl returned with the wine and the cigar, and nodding her head in a certain direction, said, "That is Castados."

Vernon scanned attentively the man indicated, who might have stood for a model of Hercules, with his huge and well-rounded limbs, and his great breadth of shoulders and chest. His head was large, and covered with coal-black hair; immense whiskers of the same colour; a complexion of mahogany; and eyes, shaded by enormous brows, dark, piercing, and restless; his neck, more like a bull's, was quite bare, having cast aside his handkerchief; he appeared about thirty years of age, and taking his features altogether, they were rather handsome than otherwise. As Sidney Vernon scanned attentively the features and appearance of the Catalonian contrabandist, the man reading the paper, called out,

"Here's a precious go, comerados, for the holy brotherhood—a nice bit for the faggot and stake, if it had happened a few years ago; as it is, it's an ugly twist the heretic will get from the Inquisitor, if they catch him. I wish we could lay hold of the pair."

"What the devil are you jawing about?" said Castados, suddenly fixing his eyes upon Sidney Vernon, and blowing a cloud of smoke from his immense and massive jaw; "I saw the stuff you are reading, placarded five or six days ago on the door of the Dominican Church."

"Wouldn't it be a good catch," asked the reader, "to get hold of them? look at the reward, one thousand sequins for restoring the girl to her parents!"

"I wish you may catch them," returned Castados; and Vernon fancied his eyes were fixed upon him with a very peculiar expression.

Determined to have nothing to do with the contrabandists, he drank his wine, and watching his opportunity, left the room, and meeting the girl, paid for the wine and cigars, saying, "I have seen him, but will speak with him another time."

"Take care how you deal with Castados," said the young girl; and in a low voice she whispered, "He's not to be trusted."

So thought our hero, as he passed out into the street and took his way, vexed and uneasy, towards the quay.

Suddenly he felt his arm grasped; turning sharp round, with his hand upon the butt of his pistol, he at once recognized the contrabandiste Castados.

"Pardon, me, senor," said the smuggler, in a quiet, civil tone, "I mean you no harm by stopping you; on the contrary, I will assist you; you may trust me, notwithstanding what that jade said; I heard her—she meant I would cheat you in a bargain—perhaps I might; but it's not bargains you want of me."

Rather startled by this address, Vernon for a moment felt puzzled how to act, for he imagined the smuggler either knew or suspected who he was; but recovering his coolness, he said,—

"May I ask you, what induces you, a total stranger, to think you can be of service to me?"

"Oh!" returned the Spaniard, with a careless laugh, "I'm willing to let you know my motives—plain sailing with me. My name's Castados, and my occupation that of cheating the cursed revenue. I take it you are an Englishman, and are called Vernon. My name is well known from one end of the Mediterranean to the other; and yours, the holy fathers of the most holy Inquisition are doing their best to render equally notorious from one end of Spain to the other. If you remain two days longer in Malaga, you have a tolerable good chance of being roasted, or else stretched to double your length. Curse them! I don't like their machinery, and I'll help you to escape them, providing you will pay me handsomely."

Sidney Vernon was staggered: to refuse Castados's offer of assistance would be madness—to shoot him would be murder—therefore, he at once, as the case was desperate, resolved to trust him.

"Before we come to any settlement," he observed, "tell me, how you came to know me?"

"Very simply, senor; I saw you this morning leaving the door of the Maltese hotel; I had just been reading the placard on the church of the Dominicans. I was at once struck with your figure; I followed you at a distance, and saw you enter the house of the widow of an old

comrade. Two hours after, I met the widow's daughter coming out of the 'Three Mariners'—the girl there is her first cousin—I asked her who was the lodger her mother had; she, without thinking anything of it, told me that it was an Englishman and his wife. I turned away without asking any more questions, determined to call the very next day and to tell you, you were lost if you tarried in this town, and to offer you my vessel. When you came into the 'Three Mariners' to-night, I recognized you at once; and when you took off your cap, I saw the scar on your left temple—the sabre-cut—noticed in the placard; I was then sure you were the Senor Vernon. So now, senor, I will strike a bargain with you; I will engage to take you clear of the marking-irons of the Inquisitor-General, provided we agree to terms."

"May I ask you, Captain Castados," enquired Vernon, "why, having discovered who I was, and the tempting reward offered for my apprehension, you and your comrades did not lay hands on me, when the odds were certainly on your side?"

"For several reasons. First of all, not being partial to bringing myself and comrades into notice; secondly, I could very well imagine, you could not be secured without a deadly struggle; and, thirdly, and in fact, the chief reason, interest; for if the Inquisitor-General is willing to pay a thousand sequins for your apprehension, it struck me, senor, you would willingly pay double that sum to escape from his paternal kindness; and to tell the truth, I have too often violated the laws myself, and have lived too long by defying them, that it would go against my conscience to betray another for doing the same thing."

Having heard the contrabandist to an end, Sidney clearly perceived that he had no choice left but to come to terms with him; not that he by any means felt confident in his faith. The only way he considered was to make it worth his while to be honest and faithful; money was of no consequence to him—his only object, therefore was to secure the smuggler's services by the offer of a

very large sum—provided he landed them in safety on the coast of Italy, wind and weather permitting.

“Can you sail to-morrow night?” he demanded after a pause.

“I intended to do so, whether you agreed with me or not. To-morrow night I shall be ready for sea, at any hour you name; my vessel lies at anchor in the bay, to the eastward of the mole, ready to start at a moment’s notice.”

“Well, then, if you faithfully keep your word, and land us at the first Italian port you can make, I will engage to pay you a sum of two thousand sequins. I have a draft on a bank in Leghorn for double that sum—will that satisfy you and your comrades?”

“Amply, *Senor Capitanos*,” eagerly exclaimed the smuggler; “and you may depend upon my fidelity. All you will have to do, is to be on yonder beach to-morrow night, as the clock of the Dominican church strikes eleven, it will then be quite dark; I wish to clear the land while this breeze lasts, and get round the Cape De Gatt, for I suspect the weather. My vessel has an excellent cabin, and you will have nothing to provide, as I will lay in all things necessary for the voyage.”

“Then,” said Vernon, handing him his purse with some gold in it, “lay that out in articles of food necessary for a lady. You will not repent if you serve me faithfully.”

“Be satisfied, *senor*, you will have no reason to complain;” so saying, the smuggler pocketed the purse, and returned to the inn, leaving our hero to pursue his way to the cottage, not altogether perfectly satisfied with the situation he was placed in with respect to Captain Castados, and yet seeing no possible means to avoid him, he was certainly in his power—and his sole safeguard was the smuggler’s greedy desire of gain.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE church clock of the Dominicans had sounded the tenth hour, as Vernon and his beloved Ina prepared to leave the little cottage, where so many happy hours had been passed. He had not mentioned one word respecting his suspicion of Castados ; neither did he relate any of the conversation he had with him ; merely telling her he had succeeded in engaging a good vessel to carry them to the nearest Italian port.

The few articles necessary for her comfort he packed up in a small leather valise, and that, and his desk containing his money, was all their luggage.

During the day the weather had greatly changed. Dense masses of clouds hung suspended over the sea, without any visible motion ; the air was close, sultry, and almost unbearable ; when, having settled everything with his kind landlady and her daughter, they took their leave, and sallied out into the road leading to the town ; Ina clinging to her husband's arm, with hope and confidence in her heart, and longing till the shores of Spain were left in the distance.

"It's a very dark night, Sidney," she said, as they pursued their way ; "and very little if any wind to carry us out to sea. Do you not feel it very oppressive ?"

"I do, love," said our hero, pressing the little arm resting on his, close to him ; "but once clear of the bay, we shall have more wind."

He did not express the uneasiness he felt at the aspect of the heavens, for, accustomed all his life to study the ever-changing sky, he saw clearly that the weather was about to change, and that, before morning, there would be a strong sea breeze. His only anxiety was to gain an offing, and get out of the bay ; being aware that the Catalan vessels were magnificent sea-boats, and equal to any weather, with sea room.

The bell tolled the eleventh hour as they ascended, without any difficulty, the height above the sea-beach, where they felt the wind blow in puffs off the land ; but, nevertheless, the ground-swell ran in on the beach, having that peculiar sound seamen understand, and which clearly foretells to them a shift of wind. Just as they reached the cliff, they beheld the tall form of Castados advancing from the inn of the "Three Mariners" towards them.

"You are punctual, senor," said the contrabandist, "and there is no time to lose. We are all ready to up anchor. See, the sails are set."

Vernon looked over the dark waters, and at once perceived the white, lofty sails of the Catalan.

"Follow me, senor, carefully," said Castados ; "the path is a little steep to the beach. The boat is waiting. Allow me to carry these small things. You will want all your care for the senora."

Giving Castados the valise and desk, Vernon raised Ina in his powerful arms, and carried her safely down the steep and serpentine path to the beach.

It was extremely dark, and they did not perceive the boat till almost beside it. There were two men in her, and two standing up to their knees in the water, holding her stern in upon the sands, to prevent her striking with the rise and fall of the surf.

Castados seized an oar and jumped in, saying, as our hero wrapped his wife carefully in her mantle, "Allow me to assist."

As Vernon lifted Ina over the side, he received a tremendous blow from a bludgeon, which stretched him, without sense or motion, on the beach. He did not even hear the wild, piercing shriek of his wife, or the exulting laugh of the ferocious Castados, as he twisted the mantle over her head, and placed her on the floor of the stern, telling the men to jump in, and shove off, crying out. "We shall scarcely clear the point before the sea-breeze sets in."

"Shall I give him another taste of this handy tool?" said the ruffian who had struck down our hero.

"Jump in, fool. Leave him alone ; he has had enough for to-night. The water will cool the heretic's blood—and the ground swell increases. Shove off!"

The men sprang in, seized their oars, and amid a joyous laugh from the smugglers, and a stifled scream from the wretched captive, the boat shot from the beach.

For more than half an hour our hero lay apparently dead, so still and motionless was he, stretched upon the sands, with the spray of the rapidly-increasing surf falling on his face and person. But at length, the sensation caused by the water washing over him, began to recal him to his senses, and he gradually showed signs of life. At this time the surf rolled over his entire person ; for, though there are no tides in the Mediterranean, yet, when the ground-swell rolls in heavily, the sea runs many feet higher up the beach than when land-winds prevail.

Vernon recovered consciousness rapidly, and recollection also ; though dizzy and confused, he yet made an effort to get out of the reach of the surf, and then paused, little heeding the suffering he endured from the blow, for there was ten times more agony in his thoughts. Ina, his adored wife, was torn from him, and in the power of lawless ruffians. He did not fear for her life ; neither, indeed, after a few moments' reflection, did he think they would dare to ill-treat her. Their object, he thought, must be to restore her to her family, and claim the reward. If so, she was sure to be well-cared for ; and there was some consolation in that idea ; but suddenly rousing himself, and getting sufficiently strong to stand, he gazed out on the dark waters before him, with a passionate burst of sorrow at his cruel misfortunes ; for Ina was dearer to him than ever—and to lose her, there was madness in the thought. Taking off his handkerchief, he steeped it in the waves, and tied it tightly round his head. He still possessed a few gold pieces in his pocket, and his pistols, powder-flask, and balls. They were perfectly dry, being protected by the leather case they were closed in, and which he had strapped under his mantle, round his waist.

On reflecting over the late event, it struck him that Castados would make for the nearest port—which was Almena. It was not at all likely that he would stand to the westward, or attempt to run through the Straits—in order to make Lucan, at the mouth of the Guadalquivir. As he sat turning over every circumstance of the past in his mind, he felt that there was a change of wind; and that it now blew from the sea, and in strong gusts, while the intense gloom overhead was startling. A sensation of fear and uneasiness of another kind now took possession of his mind; the wind blew direct upon the coast, with every appearance of a heavy gale; and if the Catalan had stood away towards the Cape de Gatt, she would be deeply embayed, and quite unable to reach Almena, or to return to Malaga; for the coast between the two ports was notorious for its dangers with southerly gales.

Having recovered sufficiently to leave the fatal spot where his beloved wife had been torn from him, he began to ascend the cliff, when a vivid flash of lightning illumined for a second the whole scene around. Crash after crash of thunder rolled over the city, and then the storm burst in all its awful magnificence upon the surrounding country. The gale came no longer in squalls, but with a steady violence, almost overwhelming; and Vernon shuddered: for in every powerful gust, he read the fate of the Catalan. He knew it was utterly impossible she could stand the storm,—embayed, and with such a terrible coast under her lee. Anxious and wretched beyond measure, he struggled on, continuing his way as he could along the coast; a deluge of rain falling, seemed, for the moment, to lull the wind; but it was only for the moment; the thunder again roared, and the lightning flashed, though it rapidly rolled on, driven by the gale. And still our hero, with but one thought in his heated brain, struggled forward; and having traversed a long range of wild sea coast, just as the day broke, he was ascending the bold, jutting, craggy height of Montreelé; from the summit of which he expected

to obtain an extensive view along the entire coast to the eastward. Day broke—dull, dreary and overcast—though the fury of the gale was spent; the wind was still blowing from the south, but no longer terrible in its wrath—and the rain began to cease; when, weary and dejected, he reached the outermost edge of the cliff, and anxiously looked down upon the troubled sea beneath, which ran in upon the rugged iron-bound coast with a ceaseless roar, covering it with wreaths of snow-white foam, and dashing its spray high into the air. Off this headland there was a long range of sunken rocks, and beyond them, again, a long and dangerous shoal.

Vernon was well acquainted with this line of coast, from actual knowledge, when cruizing off the Cape de Gatt in the *Penelope* frigate, and also from the charts he had studied. And he knew there was a passage between the shoals and the reef of sunken rocks, through which a vessel might run, if she could not weather the shoal; but it required much skill, and clear daylight, to attempt the passage. Anxiously he gazed out upon the storm-tossed sea; not a vessel met his sight; but, as his eyes rested on the broken water, that foamed and boiled over the reef, he started, and for a moment felt ready to sink to the earth with a sickening sensation of despair; for on the inner edge of the shoal, he saw clearly enough the dismasted hull of a vessel, over which the sea broke heavily, although, comparatively speaking, the outward edge of the sand broke the violence of the great body of water. "Can this be the hull of the *Catalan*?" was the first thought of our hero, as he strained his sight to get a more distant view; while the perspiration, engendered by the agony of his mind, poured from his brow,—as he stood spell-bound, a thousand wild thoughts, engendered by despair, rushing in confusion through his brain. After gazing some time, he beheld a dark object moving through the water, close by the dismasted hull; and the next instant, he perceived it was a boat full of men, pulling in for a passage through the reef of rocks. At first it struck him as extraordinary that they should pull in for the shore, which appeared,

notwithstanding the cessation of the storm, to be one sheet of broken water, while the roar of the surge, as it dashed against the rocks beneath, came plain and distinct to his ear, elevated as he was above it.

He felt firmly convinced that the hull, which had now gone entirely to pieces, was the hull of the Catalan, and that the men in the boat were the crew; and no doubt his beloved Ina was with them; for, assuredly, they would never have the heart—put interest out of the question—to leave her to perish! No sooner impressed with this idea than he began descending the cliff with all the expedition he could exert; and when half way down, turning an angle of rock, he at once perceived the spot the boat evidently was pulling in for, as it afforded a safe landing. This place was a most singular and natural creek, or rather deep canal, running in between the solid rocks of the headland; the water, of great depth within the creek, rose and fell with the violent motion and agitation without; and the creek itself was of sufficient width to allow a boat, if managed skilfully, to lie afloat within, by merely guarding against striking the sides of the rocks.

Vernon reached the brink of this creek, bathed in perspiration from his violent exertions in order to gain the spot before the boat, so as to conceal himself.

Climbing a rock, our hero was enabled to look out upon the sea without exposing himself; and thus obtained a clear view of the advancing boat. The four men at the oars pulled steadily and cautiously through the heavy seas, as they rose and fell in the deep troughs of the billows. With a feeling of intense joy he beheld in the stern sheets of the boat his Ina! he recognised the mantle that enveloped her, and also the huge form of Castados, the smuggler, who sat beside her, steering. There were four men in the boat, and a heap of articles in the bow, piled up. The wind had gradually lulled; a heavy and continuous rain was beginning to fall. Concealing himself in a narrow deep fissure in the rock, which commanded a clear view of the entrance, and the whole of the creek, the anxious husband sat down, took

out his pistols, drew the charge, and reloaded them. As he did so, the boat came more into sight, and the rowers paused, to await a favourable moment to shoot into the creek. There was no mistake,—there was Ina, wrapped in her mantle, her head drooping, and her whole attitude and manner betokening despair and misery. Next her, was the villain Castados—his head bound round with a red kerchief. One of the men stood in the bows, with a boat-hook in his grasp; and just as a heavy sea broke across the mouth of the creek, the men bent to their oars; and before the second sea could reach them, they had shot the boat safely into the creek. The moment she entered, two grapnels were thrown, one on each side of the bason, and the boat became checked, and held in the middle. By this means Castados directed the crew to land,—facing the entrance to a large cave, just opposite to where Vernon was concealed;—three or four of the men at once jumped ashore; and then our hero perceived that Castados was unable to stand—that one leg was bandaged round with a strip of canvass; hurt, no doubt, by the falling of the mast of the vessel, or in getting out of the wreck. Ina, as the boat became stationary, threw back the hood of her mantle; and then her deeply-anxious husband beheld her lovely, but deadly pale features. She cast a troubled look around, and the anguish expressed in her beautiful face, smote our hero to the heart; he dare not at that moment relieve her anguish by showing himself. Castados, in a savage tone of voice, desired two of the men to lift their victim on shore; but with calm dignity, she motioned them back, and watching the moment the boat approached the side, she stepped ashore without aid or help from the men surrounding her.

The men with some difficulty contrived to get Castados out of the boat, and showing Ina the way into the cave, placed several old sails for her to sit down on, at the same time placing Castados in a reclining position at the entrance, and then began unloading the boat of the things they had saved from their vessel.

"Come bear a hand, men!" shouted Castados; "place those muskets beside me, I must take care of this bird, and we'll clip her wings if she stirs. Do you all clamber over the rocks—you will be able to drag many of the kegs and barrels in upon the beach; for the wind, with this heavy rain, I expect every moment will claw off shore; besides, the vessel is broken up, and lots of articles will wash in with the set of the current."

The anxious watcher heard these words with a thrill of joy. In a moment he calculated the chances in his favour of releasing his beloved wife. He noted every movement of his enemies with intense eagerness—he saw the men place the muskets close to Castados's side, along with the dry powder and ball, who immediately commenced loading them, as he said, to keep himself employed; and he swore at his bruised leg, for broken he declared it was not, though it kept him from moving. The men then commenced climbing over the rocks in order to reach the beach, hoping to pick up something from the wreck of the Catalan.

Once they were dispersed to a sufficient distance, Vernon resolved, at all hazards, to carry off Ina in the boat, which was very large and long, such as is used by the contrabandists in running their goods in shore, and capable of encountering very heavy seas. The only difficulty was in passing the entrance, but even that danger was lessened, for the sea fell rapidly, and no longer broke violently across; the rain ceased, and the clouds breaking over the land, a bright blue sky showed here and there.

Summer storms, though often in the Mediterranean of excessive and terrible violence, are but of short duration; with the cessation of the gale the sea falls rapidly.

Another risk was being seen by Castados, in his passage across the creek; if he pulled the boat towards him to cross, the wretch would unquestionably fire at him, and at so short a distance he could scarcely fail of killing or disabling him, and thus frustrate his project; besides which, the report of the musket would bring back

the smugglers. On second thoughts, he resolved to steal round the creek, and reach the cavern that way, keeping as much as possible out of sight. In this manner he reached the waterfall, and with some difficulty, and a good drenching, got to the other side; he now considered his difficulties were over, and advanced, with a cocked pistol in his hand, more boldly towards the cavern. In climbing a mass of rock, jutting right into the creek, he displaced a large piece of stone, which fell into the water with a loud splash.

Castados, who was seated facing the rock, looked up at the noise, and instantly recognized our hero clambering down; with a fearful imprecation, he seized a musket, and taking aim, fired, the ball shattering the rock within a few inches of Vernon's head, whilst a piercing shriek from Ina rang in his ears. As he dropped from the rock, and rushed towards the cave, Castados seized another musket, and would have pulled the trigger before our hero could possibly have defended himself—being at too great a distance to fire his pistol—when Ina, who had, with a joy almost delirious, recognized her husband—threw herself upon the smuggler's arm and diverted the musket from its aim.

With a savage curse, the monster raised his clenched hand to smite the devoted wife; but, before the blow could descend, the husband reached his side, and with the butt of his pistol felled him senseless to the earth. The next instant he clasped his beloved wife to his heart. That moment of joy and rapture repaid them for their long hours of suffering.

"Oh! Sidney, Sidney, my adored husband! the mercy of God is great," sobbed the agitated Ina, whilst a flood of tears—tears of joy—filled her eyes.

"There is not a second to lose, beloved," said Vernon; "we must escape instantly, in that boat; the report of the muskets may have reached that brute's comrades. Let us be quick;" taking up the muskets, he tossed them into the creek; then seeing his desk and leather valise, he took and put them into the boat, along with a

keg of spirits, and a bag of biscuits; next, hauling the boat close, Ina was helped in; and then our hero commenced forcing the boat towards the mouth of the creek.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Ina; "look, dearest, two of the wretches are climbing over the rocks—they see us."

"It matters little, my love," said our hero, exerting himself to the utmost, to get clear of the creek. "Once out, we are safe enough, for the wind is blowing strong from the north, as it usually does in the Mediterranean after a thunder storm."

The shouts and curses of the amazed smugglers, who now clearly perceived them, resounded through the air, echoed from the rocks; and just as he was urging the boat past the entrance, two of the men reached the side of the creek, and laying hold of the grapnel, tried to throw it into the boat. They succeeded. But Ina, with determined courage and nerve, cast it out again; and the next moment they were in the open sea, rolling on the still heavy, but unbroken waves, that burst with a noise like thunder on the beach, whilst the strong land-wind soon drove them out of the reach of the surf, and the curses and imprecations of the baffled contrabandists.

"Thank God!" said Ina, with clasped hands, and eyes turned to heaven, in thankfulness, "we are saved from those wretches. If we perish now, we perish together. Oh, Sidney! what agony, what torture of mind and heart have I not suffered since we parted! Years of suffering compressed into a few hours."

Her husband could only press her to his heart—for words to express his feelings he could find none. Meanwhile, the management of his craft forbade all conversation for a time, and called for his entire attention; they were drifting fast upon a sunken reef, whilst the wind blew strong, as the clouds dispersed and left a bright blue vault above: the sun falling gloriously upon the still troubled sea. The swell upon the rocks broke with a deafening uproar, startling Ina from her dream of happiness.

But Vernon was on his native element, and little heeded, with Ina by his side, the increasing force of the wind, or the tumbling sea, as it roared over the reef. Putting in the tiller, he directed Ina how to hold it on one side, while he stepped the mast.

He reefed the sail, and hoisted it; and then taking his place beside his beloved partner, he hauled the sheet home, and easily weathered the reef; having done so, he had to run before the wind a mile or two, to avoid the bank. By this time, the north wind had increased so rapidly, that he was forced to take in another reef, to avoid drenching his wife with the spray that flew over the boat from the short seas that began to rise.

"I fear, Sidney," said Ina, looking a little startled, "we are going to have a storm from the land. See, not a speck is there left on the sky. I have heard you say, after a south wind and rain, it often blows a heavy gale from the north. The sea is getting quite white with its violence already."

"Do not be alarmed, dearest," said our hero; "this boat is a safe and fast craft of her kind—and we are close in shore—so the sea will not trouble us. I will put her under easy sail until its first violence is over."

Ina became reassured: she was with her husband—and with him she feared nothing.

Keeping the boat direct before the breeze, with a mere yard of canvas exposed to lift her over the seas, she scudded safely and easily, and the land receded rapidly. For three hours the fury of the gale lasted, and then as suddenly began to fall; when Ina exclaimed—

"Heavens! look Sidney—away to the left there!" and she pointed with her hand to the eastward. "What is that?"

Vernon followed the direction of her eyes, and beheld a large black object, rising and falling with the still remaining heavy swell. Standing up, he looked at it steadily for a moment, and then said—

"It's a dismasted vessel; a large one, too, or else a ship on her beam ends. We can carry canvas now. I will stand towards her; possibly life may be saved."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOISTING his reefed sail, and hauling aft the sheet, Vernon steered his boat towards the dark object, which appeared about three miles to the eastward of them.

"I fear," said Ina, "that some terrible calamity has occurred to that vessel—for vessel I can now see it is. And look, dearest, is not that something white waving? There is some one alive—thank God for that!"

As they rapidly neared the dark object, the experienced sailor distinctly made her out to be a large vessel on her beam ends; and, moreover, on her quarter and in her rigging he beheld several human beings, amongst whom were the figures of females. The vessel lay very low in the water, and at times the sea made a clear breach over her. When sufficiently close to drop down with the wind, Vernon lowered his sail, and got out an oar, and directed the anxious Ina how to put the helm so as to counteract the oar. Just then he was hailed by one of the crew on the wreck, in the lingua franca used by most foreign sailors navigating the Mediterranean. "For God's sake, be quick along-side! The vessel is sinking fast, and the females are half dead."

Vernon, by the tone, manner, and dress of the men on the wreck, knew they were English, and at once said: "Stand by; I will throw a rope, and you can haul the boat up under the lee of the quarter"—the only part that was high above the water. A few seconds more, and he succeeded in throwing a rope. It was caught, and the boat was hauled as near as her safety permitted. It was then our hero perceived that one of the females was a young and beautiful girl, though pale as death, with her hands clasped in agony, and seemingly fainting; the other was a middle-aged woman, who appeared in an awful terror. With the greatest care and tenderness,

an elderly man, evidently the captain of the vessel, with the assistance of the others, lowered the two females into the boat ; when Ina, with all the tenderness and kindness she could bestow, received them, and immediately poured a little spirits and water into the young female's mouth, at the same time covering her with her own mantle.

"We are going down, by——!" exclaimed one of the sailors, jumping into the boat, followed by the rest. The rope was instantly cast off, and the men, seizing the oars, pulled away from the sinking craft. The next moment she gave a heavy lurch forward, and disappeared beneath the waves ; while the young girl gave a cry of agony, exclaiming : "Oh, God ! my mother ! my poor mother !"—and instantly became insensible. Ina, greatly shocked, strove, with the little assistance the other female, evidently an attendant of great respectability, could give, to restore her.

"Poor thing !" said the English captain, rubbing his hard hand across his eyes. "Poor thing !—she has suffered much in that fated craft. Her mother, and brother, and a female attendant, went where thousands have found an unhallowed grave. We all owe our lives to your exertions, sir," continued the captain. "I suppose you yourself and this kind lady have saved yourselves from some doomed vessel likewise ?"

"No," returned our hero, most exceedingly interested in the restoration of the fair and beautiful girl, whose head he supported on his knees, while the hardy sailors were helping themselves to a glass of spirits, and preparing to set the sail.

"No ; we were not wrecked. We were driven out from the land with this gale from the shore. You had better take the helm, sir, and head the boat in for the land, as close as she will lie. She will fetch in for the Cape de Gatt, now the breeze westers a little."

"Ay, ay, sir. I see and feel that you are an old sailor, though so young a man. God help us !—in that craft I lost the savings of twenty years ; but thank the Lord, our lives are spared. She was a lady of high rank

and wealth that went down in that vessel," he added, with much emotion. "But rank and wealth lie there." And he looked sadly upon the sea, on which the beams of the setting sun still fell with glorious splendour.

"Who was the lady—perhaps I may know the name? And where were you from, captain?" questioned our hero, greatly struck with the mild and patient bearing of the English captain.

"The lady was the Countess of Delmont, and ——"

"Merciful God!" exclaimed Vernon, with a start, his whole face flushed with excitement—"My aunt!—my unfortunate aunt!"

The young girl had just unclosed her eyes, which rested on the features of our hero, when she heard the words "my aunt." She shuddered; and faintly clasping the hand that held hers, she said, in a faint, weak, and yet very anxious voice—"And you, our preserver, who are you?"

"Mary, dear Mary!" said Vernon, in a voice of intense emotion, "I am your cousin Sidney, and she who supports you is my wife."

Mary Vernon burst into tears, murmuring: "Oh, Heaven, how inscrutable are thy doings! My poor mother!—and—and——" She could not finish the sentence, but she gently pressed her cousin's hand; while the worthy captain actually cried like a child, saying, "This is in truth extraordinary; but cheer up, dear young lady. All that has happened is the will of God! He has taken one protector from you, and raised up another."

Ina soothed and calmed her mind, and while her husband was conversing with the captain, and gaining all the particulars of their terrible misfortune, the men were helping the boat in towards the land—for the breeze fell with the setting sun—with the oars.

The captain informed our hero that he had sailed three weeks previously from Portsmouth for Leghorn; that the Countess of Delmont had taken his cabin for herself and attendants; they had had fine weather till they

made Cape Trafalgar, when a violent gale from the eastward forced them to lay-to for forty-eight hours, during which nothing of any moment occurred, except that the Countess appeared to suffer much. A shift of wind to the westward took them through the straits of Gibraltar, and the weather then became remarkably fine, though rather hot and sultry. He shortened sail towards night, seeing a heavy thunder-storm overhead. When, about ten o'clock, it fell calm, and became oppressively hot, he lowered his top-gallant masts, and took another reef into his topsails, brailing his mainsail, till he saw how the wind would come; by the swell from the south he expected a breeze from that quarter. Towards midnight it became so intensely dark that they could not see the length of the ship—not a breath of air stirring, when suddenly a vivid flash of lightning burst over them. The second flash struck the brig's foremast, shattering the mast-head to pieces, and setting the forecastle on fire. In the midst of the horror and confusion of the moment—for the rattling of the thunder overhead was appalling—a perfect hurricane of wind from the south caught the ship. Taken aback she heeled over, just as the foremast went by the board, when, by some extraordinary calamity, the porter casks and hogsheads she was partly laden with must have started their lashing, and the rest of the cargo shifted. The brig lay over on her beam-ends, whilst the water, rushing into the forecastle, extinguished the fire, and drowned three poor fellows, who were coming up from below. So sudden and fearful was the catastrophe, that nothing could be done. The captain rushed to the cabin stairs. Miss Vernon and Mrs. Thomson, appalled by the uproar and extraordinary heeling of the vessel, with their garments loosely about them, had just reached the top. All he could do was to seize Miss Vernon, whilst his mate caught hold of Mrs. Thomson, and dragged them upon the starboard quarter—Miss Vernon screaming, “My mother!—Oh, God!—my mother!”

It was too late, the cabin instantly filled, and with the greatest difficulty he forced the females over the quarter

and lashed them to the weather shrouds, though at the same time he expected the vessel to founder under them and carry them all to the bottom.

During the rest of that terrible night, the sea broke furiously over them. With the daylight the gale began to go down, and he perceived that the brig was settling fast; their boats had long been knocked to pieces, for though of short duration, it was one of the heaviest gales he ever witnessed—the cabin sky-light was under water, therefore to attempt reaching the Countess was useless—she must have perished instantly.

In this state the crew remained till they saw our hero's boat standing out from the land; but steering direct before the wind, they were agonized lest they should be unnoticed; when, with a joy indescribable, they beheld the boat alter its course, and steer for them.

"You see," concluded the captain, with a sigh, "it was touch and go with us—half-an-hour later, and we should have been in the presence of our Maker. Ah! sir, I have a wife and five children, and that brig and cargo were the savings of twenty years, and not a shilling insured. I was too confident, sir, in my luck, and it pleased God to try me."

"Listen to me, captain," exclaimed Vernon, "but first tell me your name."

"Telford, sir; I am a native of the little village of Weston, near Bath. My father was once the curate of Weston. I ran away from home all from love of the sea, and in my old age it has left me desolate."

"Not so, Captain Telford," said his companion, in a low voice, pressing the old man's hands; "by last night's catastrophe, I have become—God knows, without con-
vetting it—Earl of Delmont."

"God bless me!" cried the captain, with intense astonishment; "you are then the Lieutenant Vernon who so gloriously fought the William Tell, and afterwards took the two French privateers, with a handful of men. Sir—my lord, I mean—" and the old seaman caught his hand—"you are a noble fellow, you are by —! Heaven

forgive me for swearing at such a time, but it's one of the bad habits of a seafaring life, and it was one of the stumbling blocks—my poor kind old father used to say—that prevented him letting me become a sailor.”

“Well, Captain Telford, you are right; it is too prevalent, both in the navy and merchant service. But as I was going to say, if it pleases God, we should all live to reach England, you shall have as good a ship and cargo as the one you have lost. So cheer up; you and your wife and children will, I trust, live to return Providence thanks for your preservation from this misfortune.”

The old seaman was greatly affected, and for a moment unable to speak.

“God bless your noble heart. It's not the first time you have done a good deed; I have heard you spoken of as the most generous of men.”

“How do you intend to proceed, Captain Telford?” said Sidney Vernon, as we shall still call him; “you have lost everything; I shall be able to supply you with money enough to carry you to England, and I should think, if we make the land near Almena, your best way would be to get overland to Malaga; it will not do for this boat to be recognised. In Malaga, I know there is a vessel under repairs bound for Liverpool; I shall, I hope, be able to send letters to my lawyer, Mr. Stockdale, by you: he will enable you to purchase and fit out another vessel.”

“I cannot, indeed—indeed—my lord—sir, I beg your pardon—accept of such noble generosity.”

“I will not hear a word more on the subject,” interrupted Vernon, “you have saved the life of my cousin, and I know one that would give all the gold he possessed in the world to repay that act. I never saw her till this frightful event—could it be recalled, Heaven knows I would gladly forfeit all I have gained by it, to restore the dead.”

Night stole over the restless ocean—the breeze had lulled to a zephyr, and the men, worn out with the past

night's toils, ceased rowing, for the land was yet too distant to be reached without rest. An awning of sails was made for the three females, to protect them from the night air, the men stretching themselves out upon the thwarts.

CHAPTER XL.

WITH the first dawn of the day, the men were roused from their slumbers by Captain Telford; for a pleasant breeze from the westward had sprung up with the rising sun; and the dark line of the Spanish coast appeared before them, not more than three leagues distant. Several vessels were seen further out to sea, standing away to the eastward, under a cloud of canvas. The day broke warm and bright, and not a speck dimmed the heavens; but all on board the boat rose from their troubled slumbers, sad and dejected: for each had some loss to deplore. Ina, naturally buoyant, and sanguine in spirit, exerted herself to soothe the bereaved Mary.

The boat had now approached to within a mile or so of the headland; on rounding which, they observed the village, situated on a rising ground, about half a mile from the sea. There were a few boats drawn up on the sands, but not a soul was to be seen. Protected by the bluff headland, the beach had scarcely a ripple on it, and running the boat ashore, the sailors leaped out, and drew her up, so that the females might land easily. The party then proceeded up the beach towards the village.

"It looks as if the place was deserted," said Ina. "Is it possible the French soldiers have driven away the people?"

"Not at all unlikely, my love," returned Vernon; "I heard at Malaga, that a straggling force, part of Dupont's

army, had made their way to the coast between this and Alicant."

On approaching a row of cottages, they clearly perceived that Ina's conjecture was correct;—the houses were deserted, the doors broken open—many torn off their hinges—and the little furniture within broken in pieces.

While they stood debating how to proceed, an old decrepit woman came out from one of the cottages, and gazed with wonder at our hero and his party. Vernon at once accosted the old dame, asking her if the place was quite deserted, and if there was an inn of any kind in the village?

"Why, the Gaboches have been here," said the old woman, "and a Guerilla party had a skirmish with them; all our people, thinking the Gaboches would have the best of the fight, fled, with all they could carry of their effects, to the hills. I was too old to kill, and too poor to plunder—so the wretches left me alone, and after doing all the mischief they could, they left; but the people will be back soon. But as to an inn, there is none. Our priest is a good man, he will be back presently; there's his house, yonder, next the church,—he'll give you shelter—for you all look as if you had been shipwrecked."

"Such is the case, my good dame; we will go to the priest's house, and await his return," said Vernon.

The priest's cottage had fared no better than the rest. It was a large comfortable house; the windows were broken, the doors knocked off their hinges, and the pretty garden in front trampled and defaced.

While Ina and Mary Vernon sat down, heavy and dejected at witnessing such evidences of reckless, lawless violence, Vernon and Captain Telford, with the men, went to meet a party of the peasantry they saw coming into the village, carrying loads of things on their backs: and at their head, the priest—a tall, good-humoured looking man, about fifty years of age. On seeing our hero and his party, they stopped, irresolute.

Sidney Vernon advanced and explained their situation.

"Follow me, my children," said the priest; and he led the way to his house. On seeing the weary females,—"Poor things! poor things!" he exclaimed; "you are young in years to endure suffering. The Lord is good to us! We saved the little relics and ornaments of our simple church, and some things besides. You require refreshments, my children; and, fortunately, my servants carried off a quantity which they shall speedily place before you."

Rest was what Ina and Mary Vernon required—they could touch very little food; and as soon as the worthy priest could get a room prepared for them, they gladly lay down to seek repose.

In another room the rest of the party were hospitably entertained by the priest, who spread before them a substantial meal, collected by the peasantry. During the meal, Vernon informed the padre of the particulars of the shipwreck, and expressed his gratitude to the good old man for his hospitality.

Shortly afterwards a messenger was dispatched to Almena, with a note from the priest, to a well-known muleteer for a berlin and two mules.

The peasantry, knowing they would be paid, soon supplied the boat with bread, eggs, and wine.

On looking over his amount of gold, our hero found he could spare Captain Telford sufficient to carry him to England; as, once in Italy, he could supply himself with ample funds by drawing on his banker at Cordova. He, therefore, felt quite easy on the score of money. It was proposed that the captain should sail to Malaga in the Catalan boat, and proceed to his native country in any vessel he might find there.

Captain Telford parted from our hero and Mary Vernon some hours after, with tears in his eyes. The old man was deeply affected by the generosity of Sidney Vernon.

"I will only take the money, my lord, as a loan; and it may please God to let it prosper with me;—but for

your generosity, I might now, after thirty years' toil, be a beggar. Farewell, my dear young lady," continued the captain, turning to Mary, his voice trembling with emotion. "May the Almighty console and comfort you, and restore you to your country!"

Mary's eyes were suffused with tears, as she pressed the old man's hand, saying, "I shall never forget your kindness, Captain Telford. You saved my life,—and next to Providence, my gratitude is due to you."

In half an hour more, the white sail of the Catalan's boat was filled with a light land wind, rising with the setting sun. Vernon and his beloved Ina, and cousin Mary, stood watching it till the bluff headland of Almena shut it out from their sight.

The following morning, after forcing the worthy padre to receive a handsome donation for his little church and the poor of the village, our hero, and those under his charge, departed in a good roomy berlin, drawn by two fine white mules. The good priest furnished them not only with some cold provisions, but also with a letter to the pastor of the pleasant village of Cueva de Boxa, where they were to sleep at the end of the day's journey. The letter described them as passengers in the brig *Eliza Jane*, which foundered off the coast near the Head of Almena, &c.; and requested his brother pastor to afford them every assistance in his power.

Owing to the mountainous nature of the coast, the travellers were forced to diverge many miles inland, in order to reach the main road to Cueva de Boxa.

Ina had completely recovered from her fatigue, but Mary Vernon, though greatly restored in body, was still sadly depressed. Mrs. Thomson was now of great assistance, having recovered from her terrible fright, though, in heart, sadly lamenting the fatal termination of her lady's career, and that of her child. She was anxious to reach some town, where they could purchase some articles of clothing, with which the ladies were but too poorly provided.

On the first day's journey, the driver said they should

not pass any town of importance, since they avoided Almena.

Having stopped half-way at a solitary meson to refresh the mules, they resumed their journey, through a wild and mountainous region, with execrable roads. Some hours before sunset they were passing through a very singularly beautiful valley or gorge between the hills, with a thick cork wood on one side, when the carriage was suddenly stopped, by the postilion exclaiming:—

“Ah, maledecho!—the Gaboches!”

The next instant the carriage was surrounded by half-a-dozen French soldiers. The females were greatly terrified, though our hero entreated them to be calm, as there was no fear that they would receive injury, as travellers, from the French.

Vernon put back the leather curtains, just as a French serjeant pulled open the door, without any ceremony, saying, in a harsh, arbitrary tone:

“You must get out, whoever you are. We want this carriage.”

“You do!” said Vernon, springing to the ground, displacing the French serjeant rather roughly from the door. “*Mon ami!*” he continued, “we must have two words about that. Are you French soldiers or robbers?” and he laid his hand on the butt of one of his pistols, while his anxious wife threw her arms round Mary Vernon’s neck, saying, in Spanish—

“For God’s sake, my beloved, let them have the carriage! Do not resist them!”

The French setjeant drew back, his face flushed with anger, but evidently struck by the powerful frame and determined manner of the Englishman.

“*Sacre Dieu!*” at last he exclaimed, “why do you take us for robbers? We are French chasseurs!”

“Very likely,” returned Sidney; “as far as your uniform goes; but do French soldiers, renowned for their gallantry, usually force ladies, travelling, out of their carriages, whether they like it or not?”

The serjeant looked a little nettled, but replied: “Our

officer lies wounded on yonder bank: we have had a skirmish with a band of bloody Guerillas, and I was seeking a conveyance of some kind for him."

"That is quite another affair," said Vernon. "We shall be most happy to assist your officer, with a seat in the carriage, to the next house or village." And whispering a few words to the inmates of the vehicle, whose fears were allayed by the amicable tone assumed by the serjeant, he walked on with the Frenchman, desiring the postilion to drive slowly after them.

They soon came to the spot of the late contention. The skirmish must have been a most determined one. There lay four or five dead horses belonging to the French chasseurs, and double that number of the Guerilla force, together with several dead, both French and Spanish; and lying on a bank, were many wounded, beside their officer, who was, however, sitting up, giving directions to a party of his men, whose horses were picketed close by.

"What are they doing yonder?" demanded Sidney Vernon of the serjeant, pointing to a party of men, seemingly occupied under a clump of cork trees.

"Only preparing to hang half-a-dozen of those sacre villains, the Guerillas we captured."

Though much disgusted, he approached the officer, a young man, who was propped up, and looking pale and suffering.

"You are very welcome, sir," said Vernon, addressing the Frenchman, "to the use of my berlin, to convey you to the next village; but, as I have three females travelling with me, you will, I trust, be satisfied with a seat in it."

"Sir," said the Frenchman, in a weak but polite tone, "I will not disturb your ladies. By and by I shall be able to sit on horseback. My wound is not dangerous." And looking our hero steadily in the face, he said: "Pardon me, Monsieur; you are not a Spaniard?"

"No, Monsieur," returned our hero. "We landed from a vessel yesterday, that foundered at sea, near Almena. We are English, and seek a port to embark for Italy."

"Ah, morbleu! Then I will willingly accept a seat. The English are a brave nation. But I have a duty to perform. Those rascals I have taken shall hang like dogs, though they fought like devils."

At that moment a violent uproar, two or three musket shots, and divers oaths from the Frenchmen, caused Sidney Vernon to look round, and he perceived one of the doomed Guerillas rushing headlong through the French soldiers, striking right and left with a carbine he held by the muzzle, while half-a-dozen chasseurs were trying to recapture him.

Moved with pity for the gallant fellow, who was a tall, powerful man, rather singularly but handsomely armed, Sidney Vernon sprung between him and a French soldier, who, seeing they could not capture him, raised his carbine to his shoulder. Our hero knocked up the gun just as the fugitive came almost against him. The Guerilla raised his eyes at the same time, casting his weapon into the air, and with a frantic exclamation of joy, threw himself almost into the arms of the astonished Sidney Vernon, who instantly recognized, notwithstanding his warlike dress, beard, and mustachios, his lost servant, Patrick O'Shaughnessy.

The French soldiers gathered round, with angry menaces.

"The Lord be murciful to me!" exclaimed Patrick. "Oh, sir, save Don Ferran, our leader! He's Fra Angelo, that was;—they're hanging him!"

Vernon started, as if electrified. Seizing a sabre from a chasseur, he rushed on, followed by Patrick, the French soldiers vociferating—"Cut him down! Cut them both down!"

But Sidney Vernon was fleet of foot; he reached the cork trees just as his worthy friend Fra Angelo, or Don Forran, Patrick called him, was undergoing the very fate in Spain our hero had predicted for him in Naples. Fortunately, the soldiers, executing the victims, had piled their carbines at a little distance, or our hero's adventures had ended along with Fra Angelo's execution;

but a sweep of his sabre, and a flourish of Patrick's carbine, dispersed, for an instant, the men, who rushed to seize their guns.

As luck would have it, the branch selected for a temporary gallows was a low one, and our hero, in a moment, cut down the struggling victims. As he did so, a volley of musketry, from behind a low bank, stretched several of the French soldiers, mortally wounded, on the earth. A wild cheer was then heard, and the next instant a body of mounted Guerillas, more than sixty in number, spurred furiously down the hill, and with a spirit of deadly revenge, fell upon the chasseurs, who fought, however, with determined courage.

Sidney Vernon, almost bewildered by the strangeness and the rapidity of events, thought at once of Ina and Mary Vernon; and telling Patrick to attend to the restoration of the half-strangled Guerillas, he ran swiftly towards the berlin, which he perceived the postilion was very wisely moving out of the scene of contention.

"Holy St. Patrick!" exclaimed O'Shaughnessy, dropping the head of Don Ferran, who was rapidly recovering; "they will shoot him down in the confusion, and mistake him for a cursed Gaboche," and away ran Patrick after his master, whom he came up with, just as a party of dismounted Guerillas had surrounded him; for Vernon, perceiving that the Spaniards were victorious, and had surrounded the unfortunate officer, and half-a-dozen chasseurs still resisting, he rushed in amongst them, shouting in Spanish,—

"My brave fellows, spare that officer and his men; I have just saved your leader, Don Ferran's, life—spare them!" but the Guerillas were blind and deaf with rage and the spirit of vengeance. A tall, wild-looking Spaniard, wielding a long ox goad, rushed at Vernon, shouting,—

"Another gaboche! down with him!" but Vernon cut the ox goad through, and tumbled the Guerilla over on his back, with a blow from the flat of his sabre; and being now joined by Patrick, they succeeded in restraining

the men, who obeyed Patrick at once, and who, to our hero's surprise, spoke Spanish uncommonly well.

He now hurried after the berlin, where he found his wife and cousin in an agony of terror on his account, not knowing what to make of the terrible scene enacting before their eyes. He immediately related what had occurred, and, to their great astonishment, informed them who he had been fortunate enough to relieve.

"Here comes Patrick," continued Vernon, "confess the metamorphosis is great."

Ina looked out, and, in truth, was puzzled to recognize him. He wore a casque without a plume or visor; a bright polished cuirass, and high leather boots; at his back, for he had resumed his arms, he had a short carbine, and a pair of heavy pistols were in his belt. His joy and astonishment were indeed great, on learning that Ina was the wife of his master; while the young matron expressed herself delighted at seeing him free and well, for Patrick was a great favourite at Castle De Haro.

"How is Don Ferran?" demanded Vernon, "for I expect he was half strangled."

"Faith, sir, we were both in rather a ticklish situation. The confounded rascals had nearly got the cord round my neck as well as his, but I contrived to knock the gaboches down, and was making for one of the horses, when I saw your honour; but, be gorra, Don Ferran was within an inch of being strangled. He is well now, however, and is busy collecting his dead and wounded, and protecting the French prisoners from ill-treatment, for we never injure our captives. Faix, sir, I have been acting as Don Ferran's Lieutenant these several months, and a fine life we have in the mountains; his fortress of Alhama is a fine residence entirely. But here comes Don Ferran, he is dying to see your honour—he swears you are his guardian angel."

The ladies in the berlin could not refrain looking out with some degree of curiosity at the approaching figure of the guerilla leader—the once renowned Fra Angelo. Ina, who knew his previous history, was well aware that he

was a man of most polished manners. It was the fashion of the guerilla chiefs of the Peninsular war, to affect, in a great measure, the attire and arms of the Spanish cabaleros of the olden time. Don Ferran wore a Moorish casque, with a handsome plume, and a cuirass, richly arabesqued.

"I owe you my life," said the Spaniard, with a flush over his handsome features, as he eagerly approached our hero, holding out his hand.

"I rejoice that I was so fortunate to arrive so opportunely," said Vernon, warmly grasping the extended hand; "my wife and ——"

"Another time, my good sir. We must not waste a moment," said Don Ferran; "there is a French force of nearly two thousand men at Cueva De Boxa."

"Ah!" interrupted Vernon, "we intended resting there to-night."

"Pardon me for intruding my advice," said Don Ferran, "but you will incur great risk by doing so. Part of your history I have learned from your servant, Patrick. The regiment you fought against in Madrid, is now at Cueva De Boxa, and you might be recognized. The whole country between this and Alicant is overrun, with not only French troops, but bands of stragglers, worse than robbers. If you will let me conduct you to my fortress of Alhama, where my wife will do all she can to make you and the ladies comfortable, you will be perfectly safe, and can then make your arrangements for the future."

Without the slightest hesitation, Vernon accepted Don Ferran's invitation. It suddenly struck him, that from thence he could communicate with Ina's family, for he could not bear to leave Spain with so foul a charge against him, as Leon's death unexplained.

Don Ferran looked delighted, saying,—

"Your faithful attendant, Patrick, my Lieutenant," he added, with a smile, "and a gallant fellow he is as ever lived, will, with a few of my men, act as your guide up the mountains, as far as the hamlet of Alhama; the

rest of the way your ladies will have to journey on mules, which I will order down for you. I must see to burying our dead and taking care of the wounded. We must let our prisoners off, as retaining them would be burdensome; and God forbid we should do—as some of the guerilla forces do—hang them or butcher them!”

CHAPTER XLI.

THE Fortress of Albama, situated amid the picturesque but wild range of the Alpuzares, had formerly been a building of great strength and extent, and, since his return, Don Ferran had expended much time in rendering it a place capable of prolonged defence.

Perched on the very summit of a lofty and almost inaccessible hill, and surrounded by a wild and, to the eye, sterile range of rocky mountains, the fortress was a very desirable place of residence, in the then fearfully-unsettled state of Spain.

The interior was comfortable and well furnished, and the gardens within the walls spacious and picturesque; whilst the narrow, winding path, the only means by which it could be approached, the drawbridge, and the two pieces of cannon which defended this pass, gave a feeling of security to its inmates—a feeling which Ina could indulge for the first time since leaving the convent. Mary Vernon even lost the bitterness of her grief in the quiet happiness of others, and in the sympathy shown her by Don Ferran's amiable wife, and the caresses of his lovely children.

In long after-years, in hours of peace and happiness, each of the guests would often recal the months spent in the lonely stronghold of Albama, with sentiments of grati-

tude for the refuge it had afforded them, and pleasure for the friendship formed there.

Letters were written to the old Conde and the Condesa by Sidney, explaining every particular of their flight, and their ignorance of the mystery attending the death of Leon, stating, at the same time, that Isabella de Palafox could vouch for the truth of this statement, and expressing his astonishment that so foul an accusation should have appeared in the Madrid Gazette, and brought forward by printed papers, such as he had seen posted on the church-doors in Malaga. He also mentioned his having succeeded to the title and estates of the Vernons.

Patrick, divested of his warlike costume, was entrusted with these letters ; and mounting a stout mule, with one of the mountaineers for a guide, left Alhama for Cordova.

One evening Vernon, being alone with his host, requested an account of his separation from the brigands, and of his becoming a guerilla chief.

“ After I left you at the hotel,” said the Spaniard, “ I felt troubled and depressed, and conscious of the degrading position in which I was placed, and I determined to separate myself, without delay, from the lawless band with which I was associated. About this time the Neapolitan government commenced active measures to suppress us, and sent out a powerful force to surround us in our retreat. I therefore found little difficulty in persuading them to divide our booty and disband. To satisfy the scruples of my companions, I obtained the services of a priest, who released us from our oaths, and granted absolution. As soon as possible, I rejoined my wife, who was transported with joy at again beholding me, and on learning my separation from my unworthy associates. We immediately embarked for Spain, and landed at Malaga. As I told you before, my estates were in the possession of the crown ; I therefore made application to the government, but before I could receive an answer the king was driven from his throne, and the whole country convulsed. Under these circumstances I was advised to

take possession of my property, and leave the rest to fate. I did so, and was joyfully welcomed by my retainers. The advance of the French inspired me with the idea of raising a guerilla force. I retired to my old Moorish fortress of Alhama, and succeeded in raising nearly a thousand men, tolerably well armed. The accidental discovery in the recesses of the Sierra de Morena, of a considerable treasure, which had been hastily thrown over a precipice by a Spanish escort, that it might not fall into the hands of a French force which was pursuing them, furnished me with means, and I was enabled to put the old fortress in a tolerable state of defence. One day, during an excursion, I fell in with the escort conducting the galley-slaves to Carthagena, and immediately released the unfortunate patriots. Among them, to my astonishment, I recognised your old servant Patrick, and he gladly accepted my offer to be my lieutenant. His military knowledge has been of great service to me.

“With respect to the singular predicament from which you released us, it occurred through the rashness of some of my followers, attacking what they supposed to be a small party of French chasseurs. We were defeated; and your opportune arrival saved us from a violent and ignominious death.”

Time, in the old Moorish fortress of Alhama, passed peaceably and happily. Vernon only, as we shall still style him, became anxious and rather impatient for the return of Patrick; and Don Ferran, who waited the return of his scouts with intelligence, in order to summon his followers, who had retired for a while to their homes.

Sometimes our hero accompanied him in excursions through the valleys and defiles of the Alpuzares, the inhabitants of which were chiefly Moriscoes—a sturdy, active race, having all the marks of their Moorish forefathers stamped on their features and forms. They cultivated the soil of the valleys with constant care, amply repaid by the produce, and lived entirely to themselves, loving freedom and their native valleys.

At length, all this quietness and happiness was changed into bustle and active preparation for war. Don Ferran's scouts had returned with important information. General Dupont had summoned Cordova to open its gates; the citizens had stoutly refused; and the consequence was, that the French artillery battered them to pieces, and the soldiers rushed furiously into the city; and though the people offered no resistance, the town was wantonly and cruelly given over to pillage. Notwithstanding Dupont had so far succeeded in his undertaking, he found, soon after, that his situation was extremely critical.

Bands of guerillas began to assemble, and hem him in, cutting off all his supplies; and even small parties of infantry were attacked and massacred.

Getting alarmed at his situation, the French General abandoned Cordova, and marched for Anjugas. A request was sent to Don Ferran, from several influential guerilla leaders, for him to join them, and reinforce Castanos, who was moving towards Anjugas at the head of thirty thousand men.

Now then the bugle of Don Ferran sounded through the valleys of the Alpuzares, calling his followers together, and while warlike preparations were going forward, Patrick returned. After much difficulty and danger, he had reached Castle de Haro, which fortunately was uninjured, but the Condé and all his family had left, and were supposed to be in Madrid. The mansion was shut up.

From one of the old domestics left behind, Patrick learned that Don Garcias was married, but had shortly after joined the army of Castanos, but no other intelligence of any moment could he gain; he therefore, as previously desired, destroyed the letters, and return to Alabama.

To the infinite delight of Don Ferran, his English guest resolved to accompany the guerilla force in its expedition, acting simply as a volunteer, though earnestly implored to take the command.

Don Ferran's guerilla force was certainly very superior in arms and equipments to any then formed; though

not in any regular uniform, they were well mounted, their arms—the short carbine, a brace of pistols, and a long lance—which proved a most effective weapon in their wild and desperate charges upon the enemy; but we have no intention of inflicting upon our readers the oft-told tale of the Peninsular war, and will therefore merely confine ourselves to one or two incidents that led to results most important in the windings-up of our story.

By the time Don Ferran's force, after several contests with detached parties of the French, reached the scene of action, Dupont's army had been increased by the junction of Vidal's division of nearly sixteen thousand men.

The battle which freed the province of Andalusia from the presence of a French force, began in the early part of the day, by Don Juan de la Cuez attacking the French in their flank,—who fought with determined courage and gallantry, and performed prodigies of valour. It was fortunate for the Spaniards that General Dupont's forces were separated by so great a distance; for had he been able to bring his whole force into action, he could easily have defeated Reding's advance; but, as regiment after regiment came into action, they were utterly annihilated.

Don Ferran and his guerillas, with two regiments of cavalry, were posted the night before, on the skirts of a thick wood; from whence they could command a clear view of Dupont's forces, as they came into action; and waiting for the moment to make an effective charge.

Sidney Vernon was looking with considerable interest upon the stirring scene before him—Don Ferran by his side—when an officer from Don Juan de la Cuez came galloping up the slight ascent, with orders to the Colonel of the Spanish Dragoon regiment. In a moment after, the signal was given to charge, and down the slope thundered the heavy Dragoons.

Don Ferran spoke a few words to his men; and giving the reins to the noble Andalusian horse he rode, went down the hill, side by side with our hero, at a tremendous pace, his guerillas following, with their long lances

couched, and falling upon a regiment of infantry coming into action, put them to a complete rout; a troop of French lancers coming up at the moment, a fierce *melée* ensued; in the midst of which, several large guns were brought to bear upon a regiment of Spanish horse, just then galloping into action.

Vernon, covered with dust, and half blinded with a volume of smoke from the French artillery, caught a glimpse of a Spanish officer struggling gallantly with the French dragoons. In an instant, to his great surprise, he recognized in the Spanish officer no less a person than Don Garcias de Haro. Spurring his horse to his rescue, followed by several of the *guerillas*,—for by this time they were much dispersed—he shot down the foremost French dragoon, who was levelling his pistol within an inch of Don Garcias' head, and drove his high-spirited horse against the other dragoon, who was dragging Don Garcias' horse by the bridle to make a capture. The force of the shock unhorsed the dragoon and released Don Garcias, who, with an exclamation of intense satisfaction, recognized our hero. There was no time for words, for the fight became hot and furious around them; and more than once did the great strength, courage, and skill, of our hero save the life of his friend, Don Garcias.

At length, a suspension of arms was demanded by Dupont, and granted by Castanos; and the battle finally ended by the surrender of the whole French army, amounting to fourteen thousand men, as prisoners of war.

The consequence of this decisive victory freed the province of Andalusia from the presence of the enemy.

The sun had gone down; the shades of night fell over the bloody field of strife; all was hushed and still where so lately cannons roared, and shouts, and cries, and fierce oaths rent the air; and, in their place, the stifled groans of the wounded and suffering were heard by those who, with grieved hearts, sought, amid the slain, for a loved relation or friend. Tents were pitched, fires lighted, and the conquering army from fighting took to feasting.

In the middle of a large tent, well lighted, Don Garcias, our hero, and the guerilla chief, Don Ferran, were seated at a rude table well furnished with food and drink, which articles the three officers were consuming with, apparently, much satisfaction.

"You seem born to be of service to our race, Sidney," said Don Garcias, filling a goblet with the juice of the grape. "I owe you my life half-a-dozen times this day; and we both owe our existence to Don Ferran, for had he not made that splendid charge against those chasseurs, we, most assuredly, should have been annihilated. This has been a glorious day. Our beloved Andalusia is free from the invader!"

"Glorious, in truth," said Vernon, whose handsome features wore a look of supreme happiness; for, though no explanation had as yet taken place between him and Don Garcias, yet the brotherly feeling and cordiality with which he embraced him after the action, showed that no ill-feeling of any kind existed in his heart towards him: and the few simple words—"And how is Ina? She is your wife, of course?"—completely re-assured him.

Don Ferran perceived that the friends had many disclosures to make, and feeling that he should be a restraint, arose, saying:

"Excuse me, my friends, I must leave you for a time to look after my men, and their accommodation."

"We have much to say to each other, Sidney," said Garcias, after Don Ferran had left the tent. "This meeting, so unexpected, and yet so wished for, will, I trust, restore us all to our old footing; alas! excepting poor Leon!"

"I have dearly longed, Garcias," said Sidney Vernon, with much emotion, and a sigh of deep regret in memory of his lost friend, "for an opportunity such as this. I wrote long letters, as also did Ina, to the Condé, entreating forgiveness."

"Say nothing about that, dear friend," said Don Garcias. "I rejoice sincerely, and so does my dear old father, that Ina has escaped the consequences of a rash and

inconsiderate vow. Poor Leon fell a sacrifice to the wiles and deceits of a most abandoned, though most dangerously-beautiful woman, a professed nun in the convent of Our Lady of Cordova."

"Good heavens! then you have discovered his murderer?" exclaimed Sidney Vernon, in an excited tone.

"To a certain extent, I have," returned Don Garcias. "You shall hear all the particulars as they occurred, after your flight with Ina." Don Garcias then detailed the particulars of the mysterious affair. He stated that having been instrumental in obtaining the pardon of a man who had stabbed a gentleman in a gambling-house, the fellow, in gratitude for his deliverance, revealed to him that he was acquainted with the circumstances attending the death of Leon de Haro. It appeared that a confederate of this man, a very desperate character, had formed an improper intimacy with one of the nuns in the convent of our Lady of Cordova, named Sister Agatha, and had formed the design of carrying her off from the convent. With this purpose in view he, on that fatal night, accompanied by several friends, among whom the witness was one, repaired to the convent. It so happened that Leon had an intrigue with the same unprincipled young woman, and had an assignation with her that evening. The confederates, on arriving at the appointed spot, were astonished to find the two in company; and, inflamed by jealousy, her ruffianly admirer, backed by his companions, immediately assaulted the unfortunate young Spaniard. Leon defended himself with desperation against them, and stretched one of his assailants lifeless; but in the end was overpowered and slain, receiving his death-blow from his rival.

"Are you acquainted with the name of the murderer?" asked Sidney.

"His name is Jose Mercador, and he is the son of the Alcalde of Grenada. He has also assumed the name of Juan Castados, and is a notorious contrabandist."

"What!" exclaimed Sidney, with a start of astonishment, "did you say Castados?"

"That was the name," returned Don Garcias. "Did you ever hear of, or meet this man?"

Vernon then, to the astonishment of Don Garcias, related the particulars of his acquaintance with Castados.

The conversation of the friends was interrupted by the return of Don Ferran, and before they separated for the night, they agreed to set out the next day for the fortress of Alhama, Don Garcias being extremely anxious to embrace his beloved sister, and Sidney Vernon doubly so to relieve his wife from her painful state of suspense, and at the same time hasten his departure for England, for he was resolved to leave Spain as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XLII.

DURING the short but successful struggle of the Spanish army against the French forces in Andalusia, the inmates of the fortress of Alhama remained in a painful state of anxiety and alarm; not, indeed, for themselves, for the valleys and hills of those regions were in a perfect state of tranquillity; no enemy of any kind thinking it worth while to penetrate amid the wilds and defiles of those mountains. But, knowing that an engagement would inevitably take place between the hostile forces, they naturally trembled at the results. Ina, the gentle, loving young wife, soon to become a mother, trembled when she thought—and when did she not think?—of the perils her husband was undergoing.

Donna Camilla, more accustomed to the warlike excursions of Don Ferran against the enemy, maintained a greater appearance of calmness.

Mary Vernon, who had derived so much consolation from the kindness and sympathy of others, now became

the consoler. The first violence of her own grief abated, she entered into the sorrows of others. To Ina, a sister's love was freely given, and she feared and prayed for her cousin as for a dearly-beloved brother: whilst Donna Camilla found in her company a soothing balm, and her children an instructor and playmate.

Patrick O' Shaughnessy, left, we must confess, sorely against his will and inclination, with eight men to guard and protect the inmates of the castle,—during the absence of the garrison—performed his duty with exemplary attention and care. In case of necessity, a cannon fired from the ramparts would assemble every male inhabitant of the valley, capable of bearing arms, to his assistance.

One night Patrick, having lit his lantern, sallied forth on the ramparts. Four out of the eight men left in the castle, he forced to mount guard every night for four hours at a time; he himself honestly performing his part of the duty, by walking up every time the sentinels relieved guard, and popping his head out of the window—for he and the other four men inhabited the gate-tower, overlooking the ramparts, facing the only approach to the fortress. He always demanded if they were awake, and on the alert.

On this night, having posted his four sentinels—three on the range of rampart, facing the approach and the valley below, from whence a good and active goat alone might be able to scramble to the foot of the wall; the other, an inveterate sleeper, he posted on the wall looking down into the garden, which faced the east, and from which part a very keen breeze was then blowing.

“Caramba,” growled the sentinel, pulling a bottle of wine from under his cloak, after Patrick had retired, “what’s the use of watching gourds and cabbages?” and taking a good draught, he crept into a snug nook in the high wall, rolled his cloak round him, placed his musket across his knees, and went to sleep.

It oftentimes happens that, with the best intentions, we cannot sleep at will; and whether it was the

thoughts of Pepeta, or the black-eyed Moresca maidens, that disturbed Patrick's mind, we cannot say: but sleep he could not; so, dressing himself, he sallied forth on the ramparts, to see how his sentinels got on. He just looked at the two formidable guns that guarded the ascent to the fortress, took off the caps, and inspected the priming; muttering to himself, as he did so, "By the powers! I can't think what ails me to night. The deuce an enemy is there within miles of us, and yet all kinds of things are getting into my head; perhaps it's what Parson Tom called *Presentiments*. Faix! there's this chap fast enough," he muttered, as he lugged his first sentry out of his box by the ear.

"Musha! can't you keep awake, ye omadaeen, ye? Be gorra, one would think ye would want nothing to do on earth, but eat, drink, and sleep."

"Three comfortable things enough," growled the Spaniard, rubbing his ear; "what more do you want in this world?"

"Oh, ye baste!" said Patrick, moving on, "I know three better things, anyhow—a pretty girl, a bit of a row, and a stiff tumbler of punch as Parson Tom used to make on a Sunday night, to recover his breath."

Patrick was unfortunate that night. The next man was faster asleep than the other, and required a double quantity of shaking. The third had just roused from a nap, and was complimented by Patrick for his vigilance; adding, "but I'll engage I'll find that somniferous devil, Lopez, as fast as——"

"Hist! what's that?" suddenly muttered the Irishman, stopping in his walk, and looking over the wall down into the garden beneath; "faix! I heard the jingle of steel, or something like it."

It was at this time near midnight, a fine, bright, starlight night, with a keen breeze blowing from the eastward. Patrick, from the place in which he stood, could see over the small extent of garden beneath; but where the great Moorish obelisk and fountain stood, there was deeper shadow than in the rest of the ground, for the moon just

rising from behind the lofty hill to the eastward of the fortress, threw its silvery light at that moment over the garden. As he gazed down, concealed all but his head by the parapet wall, he saw to his amazement, a human head come clearly into the light from behind the fountain, and then the body of a man crouching down; the next instant another and another was seen.

"We are betrayed," breathed Patrick between his teeth; and rushing to where the sleepy sentinel was stationed, he kicked him out on the rampart, and seizing his musket, without a moment's hesitation, took a steady aim at the five or six figures advancing from the fountain and pulled the trigger. One of the group sprang with a cry from the ground, and then fell prostrate. The sentinels came running up, startled by the report of the gun.

"Quick!" shouted Patrick, "run down the steps; throw the bar across the garden door—quick, ask no questions; that will stop them ten minutes or more. I must get the females into the gate tower;" and off ran Patrick. At this very moment several shots from below rattled against the parapet wall.

Confounded at the sight of more than six or seven and twenty armed men in the garden below, the sentinels rushed down and threw the two great iron bars across the strong oak door, just as those on the other side began battering at the entrance.

Patrick, as he rushed along the rampart, snatched up the lantern he had left there, and coming to the gate rampart he threw off the cover of the gun, and lighting the match, applied it to the touchhole.

In that dead hour of the night, before so still and tranquil, the thunder of the gun, as it pealed over the valley, echoing from the neighbouring mountains, and reverberating on every side with a singular and stunning uproar, was startling and alarming.

"Now, then," thought Patrick, "to get the ladies into the gate tower; we shall there be able to hold out against fifty assailants for a day."

By this time all the inmates of the fortress were roused from their slumbers, but terrified and overpowered with a nameless apprehension. In the meantime the assailants—amongst whom one tall and powerful man was most conspicuous—thirty in number, with savage oaths and execrations, exerted themselves to the utmost to burst the strong door, so as to gain an entrance to the fortress, whilst sheltered by the overhanging wall of the rampart, they were safe from the castle guns.

“We shall be assailed by the people of the valley,” said Castados, for he was the tall ruffian, dragging forward a huge beam of wood he had found propping a part of the garden wall. Seizing the beam, with their united force they drove in the door, and with a wild shout of exultation, rushed pistol in hand into the great court before the principal entrance.

More than twenty minutes had been expended in forcing the great oak door of the garden wall, and by the time Castados and his wild associates had gained the court, all the females, excepting the Lady Ina, the youngest son of Donna Camilla, and the girl who carried the child, had gained the security of the gate tower. The child’s attendant, bewildered and terrified, lost her presence of mind, and stumbling over a stool, fell, and in her terror, as she got up, left the child screaming on the floor. Ina turned back, snatched up the child, and telling the terror-stricken girl to follow her, rushed after the others; but it was too late, Castados and his wild associates burst in. Patrick, mad with rage and vexation, singly attempted her rescue—he was knocked down, trampled on, and left senseless on the rampart; whilst Castados with a shout of triumph, caught up the terrified and bewildered Ina, exclaiming to his men,—

“We have the prize!—there’s no time to be lost—back to the fountain.” Taking the shrieking child from the arms of his struggling, despairing captive, he placed it on the ground, and telling his men to extinguish their torches, hurried back through the court; but as they did so, another volley of musketry from those on the

gate tower, stretched two of the assailants on the earth. With a withering curse Castados paused, as if impelled by a wish to return and revenge their death ; but only a moment—again he hastened on into the garden, carrying Ina, wrapped in a mantle, like a child, in his powerful arms.

In the meantime Donna Camilla and Mary Vernon were in a state of distraction. In vain the men begged Donna Camilla not to risk her life ; she insisted on leaving the tower to protect her child, whose screams rent the air. Patrick recovered from his insensibility, and bleeding from one or two gashes from the cutlasses of the enemy, quickly roused himself, and at once ordered the men to follow the villains who had carried off his master's wife ; but by the time they reached the garden, not a trace of the assailants could be seen. Torches were brought and every inch of the fountain and garden examined. Patrick was well aware that they must have gained an entrance through the obelisk, but the massive square stones defied every effort to move them.

"They must get out at the foot of the mountains, anyhow," exclaimed Patrick, "that's clear; and if we can't follow them by the way they came in, we can muster a strong force of the villagers, and scour the whole country round.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ON the morning after the abduction of the Lady Ina, some four miles from the foot of the hill on which the fortress stood—a wild and picturesque spot—was seen a close carriage, drawn by four mules. The postillions, seated on a rocky bank close by, were very quietly making a breakfast of brown bread, garlic, and a bottle of light

wine; whilst some fifty paces from the berlin, under a turf of evergreen oaks, were tied four horses, and a handsome white mule; and seated upon a grassy bank near them, were Padre Ignatius, and a man of middle height, of robust frame, dressed in the garb of an Inquisitor, conversing with great earnestness; while four individuals, attired in the garb still dreaded throughout Spain, that of alguazils, were pacing up and down a gentle slope near them.

"I cannot think," said Padre Ignatius, with an anxious look up the road; "that if successful, what can keep Castados? It is but four miles to the foot of the hill, and it is now eight o'clock; they ought to have been here by day-light. I wish, brother Gomez, you had accompanied them, as you first intended. I have but little faith in that Castados."

"By Santiago!" returned Gomez, "I am aware there is little faith to be put in such tools as Castados and his gang of gitanos; but in the present case it is his interest to be faithful."

"Ha! the saints be praised!" continued the padre, springing to his feet—"here they come, and the figure on the mule is that of a female—he has succeeded!"

Gomez Alcada also sprung to his feet; and on a sign, the four alguazils ran to their horses, and at once mounted; the postilions also regained their horses,—and thus all was in readiness for departure, the moment Castados and his victim should reach the spot.

As soon as the contrabandist perceived the mounted berlin and the alguazils, he halted his troop of gitanos; and after a few moments conversation, the whole party, save six, separated, and plunging into the thickets and dells, that bordered the road, disappeared. The remaining gipsies—their leader himself leading the mule on which they had placed the Lady Ina—advanced towards the berlin.

With infinite pain and labour, the patient and enduring wife followed the gitanos down the steep hill, firmly refusing assistance; and having gained the bottom, she was placed upon a mule, and in that manner approached

the berlin; when, throwing back her hood, she beheld Padre Ignatius coming towards her. Her face was deadly pale, both from fatigue and contending feelings; for the moment she beheld the priest, she understood the object and intention of her abduction. Dismounting from the mule, she faced the priest, with her noble brow and eyes flashing with indignation.

"So, then," she exclaimed, in her clear sweet voice, a little tremulous with emotion, "to you, false priest! do I owe this degradation and outrage. A holy alliance," she added, with a bitter smile; "a minister of a church calling itself holy, leagued with midnight robbers and outlaws!"

"Daughter," interrupted the priest, in a calm voice, though his cheek was pale, and his eyes fixed upon the now flushed cheek of the Lady Ina,—“daughter, you forget that our religion justifies the means employed, so that our holy church benefits by the action. You, lady, have outraged——”

"Padre," said the quiet voice of Gomez Alcada, coming forward, having been engaged conversing with Castados—"Padre, it is idle wasting time that is precious, in idle recrimination. Lady, you had better enter the carriage; we must proceed."

Ina drew back, exclaiming, in a tone that even startled the cold, calm official: "No! God will yet save me from this cruel persecution!"

As she spoke, the trampling of horses' feet was heard; all present started, and looked in the direction of the sound. Castados drew a pistol from his belt, while Ina, with clasped hands and tearful eyes, strained her sight in the same direction.

The next instant, turning an abrupt angle of the road, three cavaleros, in military accoutrements, came suddenly upon them; and, with a wild cry of frantic joy, Ina was rushing forward—for the faces of the horsemen were distinctly visible, bring scarcely twenty paces distant—the road bending abruptly round an immense mass of rock—but the moment Castados caught sight of them,

he sprang forward, and seized the Lady Ina round the waist. With a scream of agony, she struggled to free herself, as the villain strove to drag her up the bank; but, like the flash of a meteor, one of the riders, with an exclamation of terrible passion, drove his fiery horse against the two alguazils that barred his path. Castados raised his pistol and fired, with a savage oath; but the horseman bore, as it were, a charmed life. The ball glanced harmless from his helmet.

"Murderer!" shouted Vernon, in a fierce voice of excitement; "take your doom from the brother of him you so basely and cowardly assassinated. Leon, my friend and brother, you are avenged!"

In vain Castados, dropping Ina from his arms, strove to scramble up the bank: the fiery steed of the avenger, with a bound, leaped the rock, and the heavy dragoon sabre came with all the weight of the rider's powerful arm upon the skull of the paralysed victim. The next instant he rolled down the bank, but life was extinct.

Throwing himself from his horse, Vernon clasped his wife in his arms.

"Ob, merciful Father!" she exclaimed, "my prayers have been heard! Ob, Sidney, my husband!"—and her beautiful head sunk upon his shoulder, as he lifted her from the height.

While this was taking place, Don Ferran and the other cavalero had dismounted and approached Gomez Alcada, who, with Padre Ignatius, appeared bewildered.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" he cried impetuously; "for an outrage has been committed. Yonder lady, the Countess of Delmont, the wife of an English nobleman, whom I left in my fortress, has been forced from the protection of my roof. You, sir, I see, are an officer of the Inquisition. What business?"

"My business," hastily interrupted Gomez Alcada, who was a man of great courage and experience in fulfilling the duties of his office, "is here!" He hastily pulled a parchment from his vest; and as the Earl of Delmont advanced towards them, the countess leaning

on his arm, he laid his hand on the shoulder of the former, saying, in a firm voice :

"Captain Sidney Vernon, I arrest you, by virtue of this warrant of the Inquisitor-General of Spain."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Earl, with a haughty motion of his arm, displacing the hand of the officer; "you are mad to think of arresting a British subject for the act of protecting his wife." And taking the parchment from his hand, he tore it in pieces, with a look of disgust.

"Ha!" fiercely exclaimed the roused official, backed by his four alguazils, who ranged themselves by his side; when suddenly, as if by magic, the whole glen appeared to swarm with a host of armed and swarthy gitanos, with their long knives in their untanned leather belts—many of them with short carbines.

"You are mistaken, sir," said Don Ferran, "if you think to intimidate us with this gang of desperadoes. My guerillas are within a hundred yards of us. They are here!" he added.

As he spoke, the quick tramp of horse was heard, and the next moment a band of guerilla warriors came up, in a smart trot, headed by a single officer, in a rich cavalry uniform, round the rock, and drew up, seemingly in great surprise, before the assembled group.

"My brother Garcias!" exclaimed Ina, in a tone of delight, as the officer commanding the party threw himself from his horse, with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

Gomez Alcada, when he beheld the guerillas, saw that the game was up, and that he had nothing to do but to retire with his alguazils and gitanos; which he was about to do, saying, in a calm, firm tone :

"You, gentlemen," bowing to Don Garcias and Don Ferran, "are Spaniards, and therefore know well the penalty of protecting one denounced by the Holy Office."

"Begone, sir!" thundered Don Garcias, his cheek flushing with passion: "and thank your stars, that I have permitted you to vent your venom without receiving the punishment you so richly deserve."

Rejoiced in heart, and thankful to Providence, that he had rescued his beloved wife from the snares spread for her, the Earl of Delmont little heeded the words of the exasperated Gomez Alcada. The principal villain had met his doom, and he felt no wish to pursue his resentment further.

Conscious he merited the reproof he had received, though he himself did not expect to reap much advantage from his more crafty brother's projects, Gomez Alcada, with a sign to his alguazils, retired slowly from the spot, mounted his horse, and, with the crest-fallen and humiliated Padre Ignatius, to whom Don Garcias did not condescend to address a word, rode slowly from the scene, of heir discomfiture.

Ina being placed in the berlin, the rest of the party mounted to proceed to the fortress, where they arrived in a short time, and were welcomed with affection by those who had suffered all the pangs of doubt and apprehension for so many long hours.

After a few days' rest and quiet enjoyment, the party prepared to leave, to join Don Garcias, who had hastened to his father's mansion, to communicate the joyful intelligence of his child's safety to the Condé, and to prepare for the reception of her and her husband.

It was not without sincere regret, that the Earl of Delmont and his countess, and Mary, parted from the generous and chivalric Don Ferran, and his truly amiable partner. Many were the kind wishes each uttered for the other's happiness.

After a pleasant journey, the Earl and his party reached Castle de Haro. The noble-hearted old Condé received them with unmingled joy; again and again he embraced the delighted Ina, and even the Condessa could not conceal the real satisfaction she felt.

After a residence of two months at the Castle de Haro, the Earl received letters from England, urging his immediate return to his country and the new duties entailed upon him by his accession to rank and wealth; a few days after receiving which, to his great joy and surprise, he

heard the 'Diomedé' frigate was in the port of Cadiz, commanded by no less a personage than his old comrade and beloved friend, Tressidder.

There was a bright flush on Mary Vernon's cheek when she heard this intelligence, coupled with the assertion that the Earl had sent off a courier to request a passage to England in the frigate his old friend commanded, as he understood the 'Diomedé' would in a week or two sail for England.

We must not now forget the Earl of Delmont's attached domestic, Patrick O'Shaughnessy, who, not without some feelings of regret, had abandoned his warlike character of a guerilla—though not for a moment had he dreamed of abandoning his master to follow the fortunes of Don Ferran. To console himself, he, with the approbation of his master and mistress, shortly afterwards married his beloved Pepeta.

In the midst of the rejoicings on this occasion, who should arrive at Castle De Haro but Captain Henry Tressidder, who, the moment he received the Earl's letters, arranged matters so that he might leave his ship for a week or two.

"Ah! my sweet Mary," exclaimed the young Captain, as he pressed a kiss upon the blushing cheek of the delighted girl, "I'm not an admiral yet, but, by Jove! I'm a captain, and that's something. Will you take the hand of a poor sailor and be his, through rough and through smooth? as the parson says."

"Yes," replied Mary, with a tear dimming her soft blue eyes, though the smile on her cheek was one of happiness; "yes, if Henry can possibly love anything as well as he loves his ship, and will give up wishing to be an admiral."

Another kiss sealed the bargain; and the kind-hearted sailor, when he returned to England, taking with him the Earl and Countess of Delmont, led as fair a bride to the altar as any this isle of beauty boasts.

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